

A visual and textual re-storying of the diary of Susanna Catharina Smit (1799-1863)

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Declaration

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Abstract

This doctoral project, which involves a thesis and a body of artworks, is a re-storying of the muted voices of three of my female ancestors: my mother, my grandmother and the *Voortrekker* woman Susanna Smit. I attempt to give voice, via a re-storying of their archives, to some of the more hidden aspects of their narratives. My objective is to draw attention to a ‘maternal debt’ that has been occluded by patriarchy, and to afford voices to the mute women who served as silent corporeal foils for men. I argue that sublimation, for women, occurs within prescriptive patriarchal cultural and social contexts, which invalidates the accusation that women might be consciously colluding in the maintenance of a phallocentric world order.

The aim of this project is to reappraise historical interpretations and cultural ideological representations of these Afrikaner female subjects, and to demonstrate how these women’s seeming collusion with an oppressive and prescriptive patriarchy was largely due to internalisation of their own ascribed inferior positions as women in a male-dominated culture. From a phenomenological and embodied perspective, I explore the tension between objectified female subjects, in their attempt to achieve a form of agency and sublimation, and a patriarchal Western Symbolic.

Three-dimensional artworks in porcelain and mixed media, and video (which includes poetry) form the principal method of re-storying my ancestors’ lived experiences. Through my artwork I attempt to create an awareness of the need for a feminine Imaginary and Divine.

Opsomming

Hierdie doktrale projek, wat ‘n teoretiese tesis sowel as ‘n versameling van kunswerke insluit, is ‘n herbetrugting van die stilswyende stemme van drie van my vroulike voorsate, naamlik, my ma, ouma en die Voortrekker vrou Susanna Smit. Met hierdie hervertelling van hulle argiefmateriaal poog ek om die meer verskuilde oogpunte van hulle vertelkuns te verwoord. Ek beoog om die ‘moederskuld’, weggelaat vanweë universele historiese patriargale vertolkings, te beklemtoon, asook om seggenskap te verleen aan die vroue, wat as stilswyende tasbare buit vir mans gedien het. Ek is van mening dat vergeesteling, vir vroue, plaasvind binne voorskriftelike patriargale kulturele en sosiale raamwerke, en dat die aantyging dat vroue waarskynlik bewustelik deelneem aan die instandhouding van ‘n fallies-gesentreerde wêreldorde, onwaar is.

Die doel van hierdie projek is om historiese vertolkings, sowel as kulturele ideologiese oogpunte, van Afrikaner vroulike seggenskap te herwerk. Daardeur beoog ek om te wys dat hierdie vroue se oënskeinnike geesdriftige deelname aan 'n onderdrukkende patriargale raamwerk, hoofsaaklik te wyte is aan die internalisering van toegekende en minderwaardige rolle. Ek gebruik 'n fenomenologiese en vergestalte perspektief om die spanning tussen geobjektiveerde vroulike subjektiwiteit, wat deel vorm van hul poging om agentskap en sublimasie te verkry, en 'n Westerse patriargale raamwerk te ondersoek.

Die driedimensionele kunswerke wat uit porselein en gemengde media bestaan, sowel as die video (wat gedigte insluit), vorm die vernaamste metode om die geleefde ervaringe van my voorstate oor te vertel. Met my kunswerke poog ek om bewustheid te skep van die noodsaaklikheid vir 'n vroulike Verbeelding en Spiritualiteit.

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Dedication

To my mother, Petronella Isabella Boshoff (born Maritz) (1929-2007).

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Chapter 1

1.1. Introduction to the study

If one is to see Eurydice, one must ask about the site of not-knowing that forms the counter of that experience, that conditions the possibility of her beauty. This is a fragmented landscape but one where the bits and pieces of inherited experience signify loss and tonality at once, are at once traumatic and beautiful. One must find the history of what she could not know if one is to try and recognize her. One must find the history of what she cannot narrate, the history of her muteness, if one is to recognize her. This is not to supply the key, to fill the gap, to fill in the story, but to find the relevant remnants that form the broken landscape that she is. (Butler in Ettinger, 2006: x, xi).

I launch this study with an examination of the life and experiences, as recounted in her diaries, of Susanna Catharina Smit, an Afrikaner pioneer woman mainly remembered for her apocryphal phrase '*kaalvoet oor die Drakensberge*' (crossing the Drakensberg barefooted), which has formed part of my family narrative for generations. The phrase, which historically alludes to the legendary endurance of Afrikaner women, mythologises Susanna Smit as an Afrikaner heroine, and allows her to be appropriated by Afrikaner cultural narratives.¹ It is this iconic role of the *volksmoeder* (mother of the nation), I argue, that informed the self-sacrifice, secret revolts and sublimations of later generations of Afrikaner women such as my grandmother, my mother and myself. The *volksmoeder* bolstered the patriarchal invention of the Afrikaner woman; wife and mother (*vrou en moeder*) who stands selflessly behind her man and her *volk* (nation).

My interest in Susanna Smit is motivated by the fact that I am a descendant (via my mother), from her brother, the *Voortrekker* leader, Gerrit Maritz. My personal narrative and the narratives of both my grandmother and mother (which also form part of this dissertation)

¹ Afrikaners are generally accepted to be white Afrikaans-speaking South Africans, although according to Hermann Giliomee (2003: xix); "it was not until the mid-twentieth century that the term was only reserved for white Afrikaans-speakers". Many contemporary Afrikaners, including myself, refer to themselves as South Africans and choose to speak Afrikaans and/or English. For the sake of convenience my use of the term Afrikaner will extend to include the Afrikaner forbears of the 19th century, even though the term was not commonly used then.

have been darkly clouded by a similar cultural trope of suffering and self-sacrifice.² *volksmoeders* are expected to willingly sacrifice themselves as containers for a patriarchal agenda sanctioned by a punitive God. I attempt to re-story Susanna's life and the muted voices of my mother and grandmother (both deceased) via a visual re-storying, for which I produced artefacts and poetry to allude, in a poetic and evocative manner, to some of the more hidden aspects of their narratives. This re-storying is an attempt to collect and reassemble fragments of precarious subjectivities, via material objects and personal memories, of family narratives. According to Mary Kelly (1984:7), archives, in this case material objects such as "[l]etters, diaries and journals offer a sustained, complex and intimate recounting of individuals' actual experiences as well as their varied responses to those experiences". She proposes that women's letters, diaries and journals are often "absorbed as part of family papers" which render women's presence "almost inadvertent" and difficult "to detect" (Kelly, 1984:7).

By piecing together the lost, traumatic and evocative fragments of these lives, my aim is to create a tableau of bits and pieces of inherited memories in an attempt to establish the tentative beginnings of a personal, maternal genealogy. In this regard, this dissertation proposes that the Symbolic and Imaginary (Lacanian terms that will be explained) necessarily reflect a phallogentric bias in universally male-dominated contexts, and that following Luce Irigaray, it is incumbent upon women to formulate a feminine Imaginary to counteract this. My art practice attempts to do this, while my dissertation reflects on the various theories that influenced and inspired my attempt to do so.

With the objects I created I aim to capture the materiality of Susanna's life as a *Voortrekker* (pioneer) woman, to start re-counting her history and to give voice to her muteness. By this retelling of one *Voortrekker* woman's story I aim to disentangle some of the complexities of nineteenth century, ideologically constructed, and gendered subjectivities. The goal of this study as a meta-storying is to both theorise Smit's submission to patriarchal norms in the context of nineteenth century South Africa (via the dissertation), as well as to re-story her narrative from a contemporary perspective (via my art practice).³ While Susanna Smit is the

² The participants in the exodus from the Cape Colony referred to themselves as *emigranten* (emigrants), and the term *Voortrekker* came into use at a later stage.

³ A historiographic metanarrative or metafiction according to Linda Hutcheon (1988:5), displays "theoretical awareness of history, and fiction as human constructs" in order to facilitate a re-working of "the forms and contents of the past".

main protagonist of this project, this exploration, as mentioned before, includes my own experiences as a post-colonial Afrikaner woman, as well as those of my mother and grandmother whose experiences I recount via their ‘journals’ (constituted as recipe books and material objects).

Both women were homemakers and both gave birth to five children. Maria Maritz (my grandmother) was born at the onset of the Anglo-Boer War, at the same time her much older future husband joined the war to fight on the side of the Boers at the age of 18. By the time of her death in 1972, Maria Maritz had witnessed the Afrikaner’s upward mobility from a defeated and impoverished minority to rulers of a country they claimed as their God-given homeland. Afrikaners of the early twentieth century, such as Maria Maritz and her husband, were farmers, and they held a fairly small share of the “non-agricultural private sector of the economy” (Giliomee, 2003:433-434). Willem Adriaan de Klerk, (1975:193) states that at the beginning of the nineteenth century “only some ten per cent of the Afrikaners were living in towns and cities. In 1970 only some twelve per cent were still living in the *platteland*”.⁴ My mother, Petronella Boshoff, who was Maritz’s third child, was born in the period between the two world wars when the Afrikaner poor-white problem was becoming a major concern in Afrikaner politics. White women in South Africa were granted the right to vote in 1930. By the time of her death in 2007 Petronella had witnessed the end of apartheid and Afrikaner rule.

This narrative, via the artefacts produced, slips between and overlaps the voices of these Afrikaner women, whose access to subjectivity as mothers, wives, and daughters has been constrained, compromised and sublimated. As a meta-storying which consists of three entangled voices it is an attempt at constructing a maternal narrative that navigates back and forth between many generations, and between colonial and postcolonial female cultural subjectivities. As a (re)negotiation crossing multiple borders this exploration forms a slippage/overlap between colonial and post-colonial experiences of subjectivity, in an attempt to provide another perspective of the agency historically accorded to Afrikaner women. In this regard, Paul Ricoeur (2006:131) proposes an intermediate level of reference between personal and collective memory, “where concrete exchanges operate between the living

⁴ Rural country.

memory of individual persons and the public memory of the communities to which we belong”.

As this project is an attempt to retroactively restore agency to three ancestral women it is necessary to consider the impact that ideology had on access to agency in the historical contexts of these subjects. As stated by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1999:466) attempts to understand previous periods of history result in, “new and different conceptual systems with meanings that depend on historical circumstances”. This study, as a historiographic meta-storying, is a reappraisal of Smit’s subjectivity while at the same time, as pointed out by Linda Hutcheon (1988:13), endeavours to consciously and in a self-aware manner, call “attention to what is being contested and what is being offered as a critical response”, whilst acknowledging provisionality. This study, therefore, concedes that cultural constructions and representations are always dynamic and thus constantly created, contested, negotiated and renegotiated due to the impact of constantly changing ideological processes (Van Eeden & Du Preez, 2005:3).

Worldwide many women still ‘willingly’ conform to practices such as virginity testing, genital mutilation, dress codes that conceal the ‘threatening’ female body, and prostitution. In a sense, Susanna Smit and my other female ancestors similarly seem to have been complicit in their own oppression. Indeed, various female historiographers have accused Afrikaner women of embracing and actively pursuing their roles as *volksmoeders* (as will become clear later). By re-reading and reinterpreting my ancestral diaries and other personal effects, however, I aim to show how these women’s apparent collusion with an oppressive and prescriptive patriarchy was largely due to internalisation of their own ascribed inferior positions as women in a male-dominated culture. I also propose that the sublimation of their own suffering (through, inter alia, religion) can retroactively be re-read as both agentic and as the development of a potentially empowering feminine Imaginary. In this regard it must be noted that, as related by Judith Butler (2005:17), agency always “takes place within the context of a set of norms that precede and exceed the subject”.

I attempt to demonstrate how sublimation for women, occurs within a prescriptive patriarchal cultural and social context which invalidates the accusation that women might be consciously colluding in the maintenance of a phallogocentric world order. Without adequate access to sublimatory expression and due to male control of the Symbolic order of culture and

language, an empowered feminine Imaginary has been difficult to conceptualise, resulting in women running the risk of remaining trapped within a societal Symbolic not of their making. My aim is, therefore to retroactively excavate the traces of dissidence I find in their respective archives and to amplify these signs of agency via objects I produced for my PhD exhibition. My intention, therefore, is to draw attention to ‘maternal debt’ that has been omitted due to universal historical patriarchal interpretations, as well as to afford voices to the mute women who served as silent corporeal foils for men.

To summarise: my re-narration, through theoretical analysis and practice, of my ancestors’ diaries/archives, remains open-ended and forms part of an attempt at contributing to the development of a feminine Imaginary in reaction to the historic silencing of women, the ‘murder’ of the mother, and the ‘forgetting’ of maternal debt, as suggested by Irigaray (1993). It is ironic that this narrative has to employ the obligatory intellectual chronological, linear method for re-storying muted female voices, which indicates that historic narratives still support a philosophy that favours the voices of ‘great men’. As Butler (2005:53) explains, “language first belongs to the other and I acquire it through a complicated form of mimesis, but also because the very possibility of linguistic agency is derived from the situation in which one finds oneself addressed by a language one never chose”. For this reason my artefactual research, in the form of the art objects I created for this project, are to be regarded as the prime vehicle for the resurrection of maternal agency and voice.

My dissertation, on the other hand, provides insight into the archival texts and artefacts my ancestors left, the appropriation (in the case of Susanna Smith) of these texts by Afrikaner historians, as well as (necessarily limited) information about their respective historical contexts. Most importantly, however, this dissertation provides theoretical tools and strategies for my attempt to formulate a feminine Imaginary on behalf of these women.

1.2. Problem statement

Numerous revisionist historians maintain that Afrikaner women actively colluded in their roles as *volksmoeders*. This thesis problematises this notion and proposes that apparent submission to patriarchal norms is due to the fact that, as various feminist scholars propose,

women have been denied the development of a feminine Imaginary in a context of male domination of the Symbolic order of culture, language and the law. My practice explores several strategies to retroactively ‘give voice’ to three of my female ancestors by re-storying their lives via a visual feminist and psychoanalytical re-interpretation of their diaries and personal effects.

1.3. Research questions

In this dissertation I ask: is a feminine Imaginary possible in a patriarchal society in which the Symbolic is entirely supportive of naturalised male dominance? Following this, can agency be retroactively retrieved from surviving texts and archives, and if so, can art be used as a method to restore agency and to contribute towards a feminine Imaginary?

1.4. Aims and objectives

The aim of this project is to reappraise historical interpretations of Afrikaner female subjectivity and cultural ideological representations. The re-storying of historical texts provides the opportunity to destabilise the foreclosure of women from the Symbolic, and at the same time challenges masculine privilege and exclusive access to universal knowledge. Western myths grounded in the patriarchal Imaginary and Symbolic have historically excluded the idea of a female genealogy or Divine (Irigaray, 1983:57-72). As proposed by Michelle Ballif (1992:96), the re-storying of female representation in history is not merely a case of adding women to an existing history, nor is it a matter of closing or filling in the gaps left by patriarchal discourse. The goal is to re/dress history and to produce new narratives that do not necessarily conform to the traditional philosophical, rational and chronological patriarchal accounts of history (Ballif, 1992:96). Laura Foote (2015:116) proposes that re-storying and reframing the past, as part of learning, provide “a means of adult sense-making” and the opportunity for transformation. She states that humans are “storytelling beings” who use stories to “interpret and make sense of their experiences” (Foote, 2015:116). Paul Nabhan (1991:3-4), as part of his study on restoring and re-storying the landscape, proposes that “[r]estoration is, in fact nothing less than an experiment in the importance of history”, and telling of stories form an important part of this process. This resonates with my aim of

restoring agency and re-dressing history by re-storying the experiences of three Afrikaner women.

The interrogation of patriarchal and hierarchical representations does not necessarily mean the negation of distinctions and binary oppositions, but rather suggests difference as heterogeneity, and multiplicity. Heterogeneity, in this case, is in agreement with the notion of the development of a female, and maternal, genealogy and Imaginary which proposes coexistence without aiming to replace patriarchy with matriarchy. In order to address cultural normative stereotypes, I seek to call into question binary oppositions, such as the association of maternal with nature and paternal with culture. As pointed out by Hutcheon (1988:65), “postmodern difference is always plural and provisional”. Richard Tarnass (1991:395) proposes that the postmodern mind may be viewed as “open-ended” and due to the “plasticity and constant change of reality and knowledge”, it has become necessary to give priority to “concrete experience over fixed abstract principles”, and that “no single a priori thought system should govern belief or investigation”.

1.5. Research Method

My research is arts-based and therefore includes practice as a method of contributing to knowledge. As practice-based PhD study in South African tertiary academic institutions is a recent degree, the study presents various challenges as far as methodology and presentation are concerned. In order to adhere to the prescribed criteria for a PhD dissertation, I attempt to accommodate both sides of the spectrum, the conventional discipline of providing and analysing data, and, in addition, an exposition of the project via the artefacts produced. Arts-based qualitative research, according to Arthur Bochner (in Finlay, 2006:322), should conform to criteria such as complex narratives, proof of feelings and facts, as well as evidence of the subjectivity of the author. According to Rita Irwin and Stephanie Springgay (2008:107), practice-based research is “informed by feminist, post-structuralist, hermeneutic and other postmodern theories that understand the production of knowledge as difference, thereby producing different ways of living in the world”. As a visual and textual re-storying, the symbiotic association with and slippage/overlap between my ancestors' voices and my own serve as ventriloquism, and forms part of an auto-ethnographic, self-reflexive narrative

and historiographical account of subjectivity from both colonial and postcolonial perspectives.

Carolyn Ellis (2008:48) proposes that auto-ethnographic research presents multiple layers of consciousness and moves back and forth between the personal and cultural, with the result that “distinctions between the personal and cultural become blurred, sometimes beyond distinct recognition”. Layers could include vignettes, reflexivity and multiple voices that provide the reader access to the subjective lifeworld of the author and the research (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). Bochner (2000:270) identifies auto-ethnographic narratives as existential in nature which facilitates a reappraisal of the past through the lens of the present with the intention to extract meaning rather than giving a factual account of the past. Although I provide historical data for this re-storying, I rely on a narrative interpretation of events based on the exploration of personal archives.

Narrative inquiry is a qualitative research methodology that is, primarily, a method of comprehending experience whereby the researcher provides a narrative view of experience within a specific lifeworld (Clandinin & Caine, 2008:541). Bochner (2000:270) argues that the choice of narrative in qualitative research is, “the inspiration to find language that is adequate to the obscurity and darkness of the experience”, and that, “we narrate to make sense of experience over time”. Narrative interpretations of events are always affected by the situatedness of the researcher; the researcher being a cultural insider in this instance. If one considers Ricoeur’s hermeneutic approach and understanding of narrative as being part of a phenomenological interpretation of selfhood it becomes possible to adopt an explanatory and reflective interpretation of subjectivity.⁵

Ricoeur (1995:12) argues that historical events can be recounted in many different forms to enable a construction of identity that is neither fixed nor conforms to a cultural code. I rely on diaries and journals, which constitute the primary data, in order to reappraise the construction of meaning within a specific cultural and historical context. Kendall Smith-Sullivan (2008:214) regards the use of journals as a valuable research method for excavating personal memories and experiences.

⁵ Phenomenology, according to Catherine Adams and Max van Manen (2008:615), “becomes hermeneutic when its method is taken to be interpretive (rather than purely descriptive, as in transcendental phenomenology)”.

Historiographies, according to Georg Iggers (2012:107), have traditionally relied on macro-historical accounts of history that conceive of culture as an integrated semiotic system in accordance with the Geertzian notion of ‘thick description’.⁶ Iggers (2012:103-114) puts forward the notion of micro-historical narratives as a method to give a voice to those who have been neglected in traditional accounts of history. He proposes, “not history but histories, or, better, stories, are what matter now” (Iggers, 2012:103-114). This study offers a micro-historical narrative account of the embodied life experiences of three Afrikaner women as a contribution (and counter) to the larger macro-historical narrative.

1.5.1. Practice-based research

The exhibition of my work as visual text constitutes the principal method for this re-storying as it is impossible to convey the intrinsic meaning of my art via photographic images or written text. According to Elliot Eisner (2008:19), the value of arts-based research is not in “tight rationales articulated by academics”, as “deeds, not words, may be in the end the more persuasive source of support and the source that yields the highest level of credibility”. Eisner (2008:6-7) proposes that art provides an evocative method of representation and knowing, not “expressible in ordinary discourse” thereby providing insight, understanding and empathy, enabling one to “walk in the shoes of another”. Irwin and Springgay (2008:108) argue that, in contrast to traditional research methods that identify research as explaining phenomena and providing answers to questions, practitioner-based research “seeks understanding by way of evolution of questions within the living-inquiry processes of the practitioner”.

The practical component of my research comprises metaphorical and metonymical interpretations of the contingency of meaning within a dynamic society and culture in the form of artefacts and poetry. The two mutually informant, yet separate, modalities in this research document (theoretical analysis and visual re-storying) constitute a metaphorical interpretation and application of Kristeva’s notion of the indivisible, yet separate, relation

⁶ Thick description is a descriptive form of cultural ethnography where an ethnographer, often a cultural outsider who endeavours to embed her or himself in the culture under investigation, relies on impressionist and multi-layered tales that do not only consist of factual accounts but also include personal interpretations. Clifford Geertz is a prominent cultural ethnographer who relies on impressionist accounts of ‘thick description’, such as his tale of Balinese cock fighting in which he “dashes off a number of clever, erotic puns embedded in a lush narrative landscape while he pursues his own thick description” (Van Maanen, 1988:107).

between the semiotic *chora* (maternal feminine) and the socio-symbolic (masculine discourse) which forms an integral part of the aim of this study as I will explain later. This constitutes a postmodern and intertextual crossing of the conventional boundaries between theory and practice, and the Symbolic and Imaginary, in an attempt to start challenging traditional interpretations of knowledge according to logocentric masculine discourse.

Derek Pigrum (2008:1) proposes that the researcher as an artist has to reconcile artistic practice and scholarly research, which requires the employment of established research techniques and methods, and at the same time revision and replacement of established paradigms, whereby the research “becomes a transformative and practical productive force” as part of a postmodern dissolution of hierarchy. Concurrently, the researcher/artist “may also use highly personalised auto-ethnographic accounts, poetry, storytelling, and nonverbal modes of artistic expression...which become a constituent part of the analysis itself” (Pigrum, 2008:1).

Ricoeur argues that historical events can be recounted in many different forms. Imaginative texts such as poetry, while “not being the slave of the real event” facilitates addressing itself directly to the universal (Ricoeur, 1995:12). Postmodern art, according to Hutcheon (1988:13), acknowledges that there is no grand narrative. It aims to undermine ideological interpretations of “value, order, meaning, control and identity” in an attempt to “reveal the signifying systems that constitute our world” (Hutcheon, 1988:13). According to William Barrett (1962:1), “[a] key aspect of Foucault’s conception of discourse is that it refers not only to language, but to language *and* practices that operate to produce objects of knowledge”. Roy Prentice (2000:528) equates practice-based research in the arts to traditional scientific complexity theory, describing it as being ‘messy’, random and non-linear, and constantly adapting through interpretation and reinterpretation by the artist.

During my research process it became evident that practice-based research ultimately involves action research which is an emergent methodology that aids the integration of theory and practice. The initial focus of my research changed considerably during my art practice. Action research suits practice-based research as it is open-ended and does not start with a fixed hypothesis but with an idea that develops as a dynamic and cyclical process of following through the idea, reflecting on the process, and continually checking whether it is in line with what one intends to happen. According to Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury

(2001:2), the “primary purpose of action research is to produce practical knowledge that is useful to people in the everyday conduct of their lives” and the wider purpose is to contribute via practical knowledge “to the increased wellbeing - economic, political, psychological, spiritual - of human persons and communities”.

1.6. Structure of the dissertation

Chapter 2:

In this chapter I provide a summary of the various feminist theories that informed my attempt to re-story the lives of my female ancestors which explains both the need for, and difficulties of, a feminine Imaginary to counter the masculine Symbolic. The key feminist theorists I rely on are:

Julia Kristeva, concentrating on her interpretation of signification and abjection, more specifically the notion of the semiotic *chora* and the abjected maternal body. For this I rely on the following sources: *Powers of horror: An essay on abjection* (Kristeva, 1982); *Kristeva: Thresholds* (Keltner, 2011); *The portable Kristeva* (Oliver, 1997 (ed.)); *Reading Kristeva: Unravelling the double bind* (Oliver, 1993); *The Kristeva reader* (Moi, 1996 (ed.)).

Luce Irigaray, regarding her notion of maternal debt as a method with which to challenge phallogocentrism, as well as her emphasis on establishing a feminine genealogy, Imaginary and Divine. For this I rely on the following sources: *This sex which is not one* (Irigaray, 1985); *Sexes and genealogies* (Irigaray, 1993); *je, tu, nous: Towards a culture of difference* (Irigaray, 1993); *A politics of impossible difference: The later works of Luce Irigaray* (Deutscher, 2002 (ed.)); *O mother where art thou?: An Irigarayan reader of the book of Chronicles* (Kelso, 2007); *The Irigaray Reader* (Irigaray, 1991); *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the feminine* (Whitford, 1991).

Kelly Oliver, in particular to her theory of the colonisation of psychic space and the call for a more inclusive social theory of signification and sublimation, more particular maternal subjectivity. For this I rely on the following sources: *The colonization of psychic space: A psychoanalytic social theory of oppression* (Oliver, 2004); *Subjectivity without subjects: From abject fathers to desiring mothers* (Oliver, 1998).

Finally, Judith Butler's theory of the psychic life of power, as a twofold form of subjection, within which the subject becomes trapped, in order to exist as a subject: *The psychic life of power: Theories in subjection* (Butler, 1997).

Chapter 3:

This chapter consists of an investigation (necessarily limited) of historical data in order to provide a context for the historiographic re-storying. Here I provide a historical overview of the genesis of Afrikaner people in the context of The Great Trek (1836) and The Anglo- Boer War (1899-1902), concentrating on the role of Boer women. For this I rely largely on the writings of Giliomee (2003), (2011); Binckes (2013); Van Jaarsveld (1975); Beck (2016); Elphick & Giliomee (1979); De Klerk (1975); Cuthbertson, Grundlingh & Suttie (eds.) (2002); Du Toit (1985), (2011); Nasson & Grundlingh (eds.) (2013); Brits (2016); Van Heyningen (2013); Bird (1965); Schoeman (2003); Packenham (1993); Pretorius (ed.) (2001), (2013); and Reitz (2006).

Chapter 4:

In this chapter I discuss the significance of the Women's Monument (1913) and the mobilisation of the early twentieth century Afrikaner. I also explore the subject position of the early Afrikaner woman as *volksmoeder*. For this I rely on Postma (1918) and Stockenström (1921), as well as revisionist historical writers who have contributed considerably to the *volksmoeder* debate such as Kruger (1991); McClintock (1991), (1995); Vincent (1999), (2000), (2009); Du Toit (2002), (2003); Walker (1990), (1995), Cloete (1992), (1999); Van der Merwe (2011), Van der Watt (1998); Van Rensburg (2012); Coetzee (1983); Brink (2008), (2015); Blignaut (2012), (2013); and Swart (1998), (2008), (2013).

Chapter 5:

In this chapter I explore the diary of the main protagonist of this dissertation, Susanna Smit, for which I rely on Schoeman's comprehensive biography, *Die wêreld van Susanna Smit 1799-1863* (2003), and transcriptions of her diary by Puddu (1996). Various scholars have written about Smit, from either a biographical aspect or concerning her religious inclination.⁷

⁷ Prof. A. W. G. Raath *Solitary in the Voortrekker community: Asceticism and religious experience in the theology of the Voortrekker woman Susanna Smit (1799-1863)* (2003); Christina Landman *The piety of Afrikaans women: Diaries of guilt* (1994); Michelle Puddu *Die piëtistiese dagboek van Susanna Catharina Smit (1799-1863)* (1996); P. L. Olivier *Susanna Catharina Smit* (1941);

My aim is not to add to existing studies, but to provide a re-reading of her diaries from a psychoanalytic feminist perspective in order to reappraise her subject position.⁸ I include an exploration of the lives of Maria Elizabeth Maritz and Petronella Isabella Boshoff based on their archives, and I conclude with a discussion on sublimation.

Chapter 6:

In the final chapter I offer a re-storying of Smit's, Maritz's and Boshoff's archives/diaries via a discussion of my art practice and poetry. The use of poetry for an evocative re-storying is in congruence with the notion of *écriture féminine*.⁹ My poems employ a method devised by Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan (2016), in which she responds to her students' memory work (writing) by employing a condensed form of poetry, known as a *Tanka* poem (a Japanese method). The poems initially resemble the format of a pantoum poem which assists in "shaping poems that would distil and express the emotionally evocative refrains" of a narrative re-storying from a feminist perspective (Pithouse-Morgan, 2016:5).¹⁰ The format of the pantoum poem according to Pithouse-Morgan (2016:5-6), is applied by using three stanzas.¹¹

I apply the pantoum format for my poetry, and draw on personal memories and experiences as well 'found lines' of text sourced from the journals of three women, in order to provide an evocative elucidation of my interpretation of their lived experience. According to Kristina Lyons (2008:81), "poetry emerges from material objects, events, and conversations", and

Karel Schoeman *Die wêreld van Susanna Smit 1799-1863* (2003); Carli Coetzee *Writing the South African Landscape* (1983); Margaret Bakkes *Susanna die geliefde* (2003)

⁸ This re-storying of Smit includes her subject position as an early Boer woman, as well as the subsequent appropriation of Smit as the iconic *kaalvoet vrou* (barefoot woman) and *volksmoeder* for a nationalist agenda.

⁹ "*Écriture féminine* privileges use of a language that almost mimics body experience, and employs a non-linear, cyclical writing that is supposed to escape discourses ruled by phallogentricity" (Balsam, 2014:88).

¹⁰ The French Malaysian pantoum poem format utilizes the repetition of lines that allows "for the repetition of salient or emotionally evocative themes" (Pithouse-Morgan, 2016:5).

¹¹ Stanza 1:

Line 1

Line 2

Line 3

Stanza 2:

Line 5 (repeat of line 2)

Line 6

Line 7 (repeat of line 4)

Line 8

Stanza 3:

Line 1 (repeat of line 6)

Line 10 (repeat of line 3)

Line 11 (repeat of line 8)

Line 12 (repeat of line 1)

assists us in paying attention to “local narrative modes and the quiet work of stitching together everyday life that occurs in contexts of violence but is often overlooked in metanarratives of suffering and redemption”.

My art-practise, which I present in chapter 6, includes porcelain sculptures as well as smaller objects made from precious metal and stones and a selection of non-precious materials. As a qualified goldsmith, I relied on my artisanal skills to produce small items such as spoons and other decorative details. I also relied on my knowledge of traditional female crafts such as knitting and crochet to produce objects that comment on traditional female roles. I elected to work primarily in porcelain, although initially being an unfamiliar medium to me, for the production of most of my work as it possesses the qualities I required for expressing necessary meanings. I made my own porcelain paper clay as well as all the plaster of Paris and silicone moulds used in my work. Paper clay is as malleable material that particularly suits sculpting. I produced, fired and glazed all the porcelain sculptures and artefacts, and collected the organic objects that I reproduced in porcelain paper clay.

My work includes found materials such as thorny branches, dried leaves, skeletons of dead animals and mummified insects that I collected on my daily trail runs and in my garden. Other found objects include porcelain cups and saucers, rope, silk, steel wire, and embroidery cotton. My choice of found objects is informed by a need to express and address various feelings and concerns. I used organic materials such as wood as a metaphorical depiction of the traditional association of women with nature, and bones to allude to the abject. The porcelain cups and spoons do not only allude to fragility and durability, but also address the notion of domesticity and the subjection of women as cultural reproducers. The fragmented nature of many objects alludes to the fragmented identity of women.

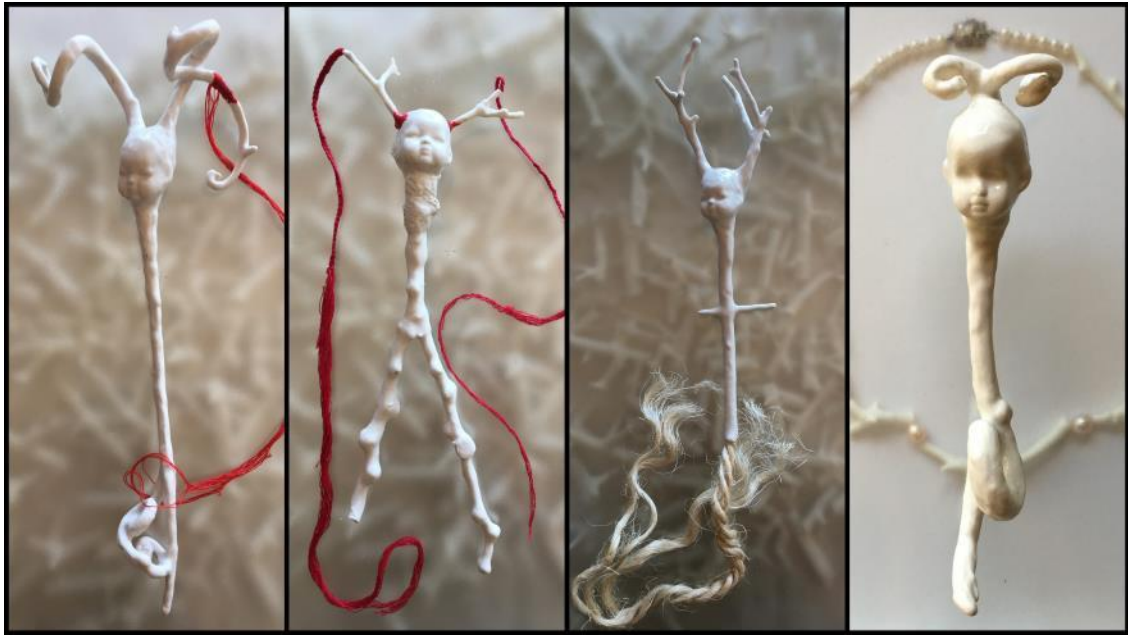


Figure 1. A selection of the artefacts produced for my re-storying. Photo: M De Beer 2016.



Figure 2. A selection of the artefacts produced for my re-storying. Photo: M de Beer 2016.



Figure 3. A selection of artefacts produced for my re-storying.

Chapter 2

2. Female subjectivity and the production of a feminine Imaginary

Susanna Smit's diaries reveal complex subjective strategies at work, which necessitate a close engagement with the immensely intricate and ambivalent processes underpinning subjectivity and sublimation. The notion of subjectivity, self-reflexivity, agency and autonomy, has a rich philosophical background that consists of a 'loose network of terms' (Atkins, 2005:1). From a phenomenological and psychoanalytical perspective (which I adopt in this thesis) the concept of subjectivity indicates a dynamic process of becoming, in direct response to an embodied life world. The embodied life world consists of space and place, historical era, family, culture and society, within which autonomy and agency can be severely restricted. From a phenomenological embodied perspective Antonio Damasio (1999:145) proposes, "whatever happens in your mind happens in time and in space relative to the instant in time your body is in and to the region of space occupied by your body"; ownership and agency, therefore, is "entirely related to a body at a particular instant and in a particular space".¹² As will become clear in the course of this dissertation embodied agency for Afrikaner women has historically been linked to their roles as procreators and homemakers, excluded from equal access to the societal and cultural Symbolic.

Psychoanalytical theory provides an 'explanatory framework' for the reappraisal of subjectivity from a feminist perspective whilst paying attention to the embodied life world of the subject (Richmond, 2000:7). According to Nick Mansfield (2000:9), "psychoanalysis is the key school of thought which attempts to explain the truth of the subject, how our interior life is structured, how it has been formed, and how it can explain both uniquely individual traits...and vastly public ones". Mansfield (2000:3), points out that the subject "is always, already caught up in complex political, social and philosophical - that is, - shared concerns", and is always already connected to the external. Subjectivity and access to agency is thus directly dependant on the historical and social context within which the individual finds herself. Since this project is an attempt to retroactively re-voice the lives and experiences of three of my female ancestors, it is important not only to clarify my understanding of subjectivity in general and Afrikaner female subjectivity in particular, but also to give an

¹² From a phenomenological perspective, we do not perceive experiences "*of* the body or between the perceived external world and experiences *of* that world" as being separate (Velmans, 2009:129).

account of the feminist theories I mobilise to attempt an empowering feminine Imaginary on their behalf. I employ an elective array of compatible theories to inform my practice and to motivate my theoretical analysis. I do not conceive of ‘Woman’ as a universal cohesive construct; my aim is to challenge the universal signifier, the Phallus, by providing a narrative interpretation of embodied female subjectivity within a specific context whilst acknowledging the significance of individuality. My aim is also to make sense of these women’s apparent submission to the very patriarchal structures that foreclosed their agency and initiated what appears like their active collusion in their own oppression.

In my reading (and re-reading) of Susanna Smit’s diaries I propose that sublimation constituted her primary defence (in Freudian terms), as it did for my grandmother and mother. I argue that, for women in a strict patriarchal social order, sublimation constitutes an ambiguous form of agency and self-empowerment. Access to agency is reliant on one’s subject position within a culture and society in which discursive formations of power, as argued by Michel Foucault (1991:61), provide the underlying structure for the creation of knowledge. Sublimation therefore relies on subject positions within the social realm (Symbolic) where signification is enmeshed and inseparable from knowledge and power.

As I rely on psychoanalytical theory in this study it is necessary to briefly discuss Lacanian theory (and its deviation from Freudian theory) in which both Kristeva and Irigaray’s theories are grounded. It is necessary to state, however, that I remain ambivalent about both Freud and Lacan’s emphasis on the ultimate patriarchal construct, the Oedipus complex, and the apparent necessity for all subjects, of sacrificing identification with the maternal. I will refer to this overview in my discussion of respective feminist re-visioning of their theories.

Both Freud and Lacan preclude the notion of an autonomous subject as identity is always contingent on the impact of unconscious drives and repression (Freud) and the influence of symbolic structures (Lacan). The Oedipal complex (castration) grounded in prohibition (power, repression and fear) and separation (rupture, rejection and violence) plays a central role in both Freud and Lacan’s theorising of subjectivity. Lacan, however, reinterprets the Freudian concept of castration and its insistence on the importance of the biological phallus (either having or not having one) and drive theory in the development of the sexuate subject, and replaces it with the abstract symbolic Phallus. The Oedipus complex (castration) as interpreted by Lacan is a pre-requisite for entrance to the Symbolic, as a passage from nature

to culture interpreted as psychic castration, whereby the Phallus becomes the signifier of rules and regulations of society.

To Lacan's subject, as a speaking subject within a culture with its social laws (the Symbolic), agency and meaning-making is accessed by conforming to pre-existing rules. In this sense, the subject is removed from its own materiality as subjectivity is dictated by an external set of existing rules and regulations (to Lacan, therefore, the body is an always-already cultural construct to the subject, who only becomes a subject in the Symbolic). Entry into the Symbolic is achieved in different stages, firstly through ego formation grounded in the Imaginary (the 'Mirror stage'), and subsequently through symbolic castration (the Oedipal complex, when the subject submits to the Law of the Father). It is during the (pre-Oedipal) mirror stage that the infant starts conceiving of itself as a separate being (from the mother). This sense of its own being engenders a primary narcissism that forms the ego. Ego formation results in a narcissistic crisis when the infant is confronted with the paradox of its specular illusory idealised self, and expectations imposed on him or her by others (the omnipresent gaze) whilst simultaneously experiencing helplessness. The infant only enters the Symbolic (through the process of symbolic castration) by rejecting its identification with an omnipotent mother, and replacing this first signifier with the Phallic signifier. To Lacan castration is a symbolic process which is made possible by paternal prohibition (incest taboo) and identification with the Name/Law of the Father (culture), which displaces the wish to be the sole object of desire of the mother when the infant realises the mother (as lack) is a desiring subject herself. The subject subsequently becomes locked in a pursuit of elusive sublimatory gratification (desire) in a futile attempt at restoring a unified sense of self.¹³

Lacan thus situates his concept of subjectivity within a framework of registers (models), the Real, Symbolic and Imaginary (RSI), which are always overlapping. The Symbolic as the societal realm (the Law, Name of the Father), constitutes the unconscious (structured as language) in which signifiers function.¹⁴ True agency is foreclosed for the subject, who always apprehends of himself or herself as lack due to misidentification/misrecognition within an endless chain of constantly changing signifiers in the Symbolic, whilst striving

¹³ According to Evans (1996:38), Lacan interprets desire as "neither the appetite for satisfaction, nor the demand for love, but the difference that results from the subtraction of the first from the second". Desire is thus the surplus produced by the articulation of need in demand; 'Desire begins to take shape in the margin in which demand becomes separated from need'. Unlike a need, which can be satisfied and which then ceases to motivate the subject until another need arises, desire can never be satisfied; it is constant in its pressure, and eternal. The realisation of desire does not consist in being 'fulfilled', but in the reproduction of desire as such".

¹⁴ "Other people's views and desires flow into us via discourse" (Fink, 1995:9).

towards unachievable fulfilment of the desire for wholeness which was lost on entry to the Symbolic.¹⁵ The Symbolic, as the Law of the Father, underpins all human meaning-making, and women therefore can only be accommodated in normative supporting roles.¹⁶ Separation from the maternal (according to both Freud and Lacan) indicates rupture. Entrance into the Symbolic is therefore traumatic and experienced as a loss that is never fully overcome.

As the domain of perceptions, the Imaginary (which always-already submits to the Symbolic) can be described as the signified to the Symbolic's signifier. Lacan concedes though that woman retains a closer tie to *jouissance* as she never gains full access to the Phallus.¹⁷ The Real constitutes that which cannot be captured by signifiers and therefore cannot be symbolised, thus remaining elusive. The Real, therefore, is the dark shadow in our blind spot of which we are always anxiously aware but cannot escape. This is the realm of the death drive, total pleasure and total horror, excess and lack, to which drives and *jouissance* belong. The first signifier, the maternal (feminine), initially representing containment (the womb) and consequently non-being as destruction of subjectivity, is banished to the Real. Sublimation is an attempt to replace the un-representable Real/Thing with an imaginary object which ultimately remains unattainable as it cannot fill the void/nothingness. Freud interprets sublimation as the conversion or channelling (often through creativity) of libido/drive energy.

2.1. Kelly Oliver

In order to make sense of my female ancestors' apparent submission to the very patriarchal structures that foreclosed on their agency, and what appears at times as their active collusion in their own oppression, it is necessary to understand subjection and sublimation as integral components of 'subjectivisation'. In support of my reappraisal of female agency I apply Kelly Oliver's (2004) theory of the 'colonisation of psychic space' in which she proposes that

¹⁵ Bruce Fink (1995:7) states that according to the Lacanian interpretation: "every human being who learns to speak is thereby alienated from her or himself—for it is language that, while allowing desire to come into being, ties knots therein, and makes us such that we can both want and not want one and the same thing, never be satisfied when we get what we thought we wanted, and so on".

¹⁶ According to Evans (1996:136), Lacan perceives of the 'Other' as "also 'the Other sex'. The Other sex is always WOMAN, for both male and female subjects; 'Man here acts as the relay whereby the woman becomes this Other for herself as she is this Other for him'".

¹⁷ Evans (1996:94) identifies "strong affinities between Lacan's concept of *jouissance* and Freud's concept of the LIBIDO, as is clear from Lacan's description of *jouissance* as a 'bodily substance'". In keeping with Freud's assertion that there is only one libido, the masculine, in which both sexes share, Lacan states that *jouissance* is essentially phallic; "*Jouissance*, insofar as it is sexual, is phallic, which means that it does not relate to the Other as such'. However, in 1973 Lacan admits that there is a specifically feminine *jouissance*, a 'supplementary *jouissance*' which is 'beyond the phallus', a *jouissance* of the Other. This feminine *jouissance* is ineffable, for women experience it but know nothing about it".

sublimation is contingent upon particular social and cultural contexts and the effect it has on the psyche of the marginalised. This informs my argument regarding the negative impact of marginalisation, such as trauma experienced during the Anglo-Boer War, on the psyche of Afrikaner women. Oliver (2004:xvi) argues that one should appraise subjectivity and agency from the position of the alienated, abjected and marginalised in order to avoid traditional normative interpretations that disregard subjectivity within an embodied context. Marginalisation and oppression within a culture and society limit the sublimatory expression of drives and affects, which consequently affects the subject position, agency and the psyche of the individual (Oliver, 2004). An inability to fully partake in meaning-making as an active agent within the Symbolic causes the subject to experience itself as flawed (in Lacanian terms, as a ‘stain’), “damaged” and “defective”, a “flawed being that deserves to be ostracised” (Oliver, 2004:114-115). This is evident in Smit’s diary entries, as I shall demonstrate.

As this study is a micro-historical narrative that includes the reappraisal of the embodied agency of three ‘ordinary’ women as mothers I depend on Oliver’s (2004:107) theory that traditional cultural notions of motherhood result in a cycle of oppression and social melancholy. Oliver (2004:110-111) challenges both Freud and Julia Kristeva’s notions that melancholy is either caused by an inability to mourn a loved object, or the inability to mourn the abjected maternal body, and proposes that it is the alienation and loss of a loveable and loved self that leads to social melancholy. Women within patriarchal cultures are denied full access to the Symbolic except through their roles as mothers, consequently having to identify with their children as a substitute for Phallic power (Oliver, 2004:111). The mother as cultural reproducer has to give up her child to a social order within which she is denied full access, and consequently succumbs to a form of masochistic depression that subsequently has a negative effect on the child (Oliver, 2004:111-112).

2.2. Judith Butler

In support of my argument that women’s seeming complicity in their subjugation, evident in the *volksmoeder* trope, is an attempt at sublimation within a dominant patriarchal Symbolic, I apply Judith Butler’s (1997) theory of subjection. According to Butler (1997:18-19), the influence of external power and social regulation on the psyche of the individual causes the subject to turn against itself which results in self-reproach and melancholia. Butler (1997: 20-21), following Foucault, argues that the formation of the self is not only controlled by

external power, but that the individual comes to depend on subordination to the very same power, in the construction of the self as a subject. This constitutes a double bind as a reversal of power occurs when power “not only *acts* on a subject but, in a transitive sense, *enacts* the subject into being” (Butler, 1997:13). A subject, therefore, becomes complicit in what seems a ‘desire’ for subjection, which is ultimately grounded in a primary alienation from culture and society, in order to access sublimation within a sociological milieu (Butler, 1997:15-17).

2.3. Luce Irigaray

As this study includes an attempt at excavating a maternal genealogy as part of a contribution towards a feminine Imaginary, I rely on Luce Irigaray’s notion of ‘maternal debt’ (Irigaray, 1985, 1991, 1993b, Whitford, 1991) which demands re-envisioning of the perception of the maternal/feminine as lack.¹⁸ An Irigarayan female Imaginary indicates multiplicity in opposition to the mono-sexual scopic masculine culture within which women only function as mothers. Irigaray’s critique of the phallographic masculine monopoly on the Symbolic, within which women function as cultural reproducers, informs my understanding of the political importance of a female Imaginary and re-envisioning and restructuring of the current Symbolic order.¹⁹

The Freudian notion of castration (Oedipus complex) which insists on the primacy of the phallus (which ‘replaces’ the umbilical cord), results in matricide when the female child turns away from her mother who like her, is perceived as lack or defective (Irigaray, 1985:40).²⁰ Irigaray’s notion that the historical relationship to the maternal body has stripped her of her power, causing her to serve as an empty receptacle for social reproduction, informs my metaphorical interpretations of the cultural appropriation of the maternal body as demonstrated in my artworks. A re-envisioning and restructuring of the current symbolic

¹⁸ Irigaray (1993b:15) proposes that there is no image of the placenta, “and hence we are constantly in danger of retreating into the original matrix, of seeking refuge in any open body, and forever nestling into the body” of women.

¹⁹ Irigaray (1993a:17) argues that “patriarchal traditions have wiped out traces of mother-daughter genealogies”.

²⁰ According to Nick Evans, (1996:22): “Freud first described the castration complex in 1908, arguing that the child, on discovering the anatomical difference between the sexes (the presence or absence of the penis), makes the assumption that this difference is due to the female’s penis having been cut off (Freud, 1908c). The castration complex is thus the moment when one infantile theory (everyone has a penis) is replaced by a new one (females have been castrated). The consequences of this new infantile theory are different in the boy and in the girl. The boy fears that his own penis will be cut off by the father (castration anxiety), while the girl sees herself as already castrated (by the mother) and attempts to deny this or to compensate for it by seeking a child as a substitute for the penis (penis envy)”.

order is needed in order for women to be accorded ‘valid representations’ of themselves in religion, motherhood, female bodies, language and images (Irigaray 1993a:86).

My imagining of a feminine Divine in my art practice relies on Irigaray’s (1993b) notion that women need to establish a non-sacrificial feminine Divine and transcendence of their own in order to challenge the Western patriarchal monopoly on origin and subjectivity.²¹ In support of Irigaray, Julie Kelso (2007) argues that the virtual absence of women in the book of Chronicles confirms the patriarchal claim on origin and its disavowal and silencing of the maternal body. Irigaray maintains that the ‘Father of Western culture’ has stripped the mother of her identity and has replaced her procreative power with language, thereby making himself the exclusive creator (Irigaray, 1991:41).

2.4. Julia Kristeva

As will become evident in my artworks and poems, I rely on Kristeva’s theory of ‘subjectivity as process’, more specifically her concept of the semiotic *chora*. In relation to the maternal body in the Imaginary, the semiotic, as the poetic dimension of language ‘(semanalysis’ as the combination of the semiotic and psychoanalysis), unsettles Lacan’s interpretation of the Phallus as the definitive signifier. The unstable subject is responsive to intrusions of semiotic material into conscious life which negates the notion of fixed identity and displaces masculine monopoly on agency. Although Kristeva remains loyal to the Lacanian notion of the Symbolic and the apparent necessity of symbolic castration, she conceptualises the significance of drives (Freudian) and the materiality of the maternal body as a pre-condition to language/signification.²² By applying her notion of the semiotic *chora* it becomes possible to acknowledge a positive influence, as a form of expression, via undifferentiated materiality of the maternal body in the Imaginary and conceivably the Real, which, therefore, recovers a feminine contribution in the Symbolic.²³ By acknowledging the dynamic and transformative effect of bodily drives within language, the significance accorded to the Phallus and the repression of the maternal body can be challenged. This is

²¹ According to Irigaray (1993b:64), the “diabolical thing about women is their lack of God, they are forced to comply with models that do not match them, that exile, double, mask them, stripping away their ability to move forward into love, art, thought, toward their ideal and divine fulfilment”.

²² According to Evans (1996:222): “Lacan speaks of woman as ‘not-all’ (pas-toute); unlike masculinity, which is a universal function founded upon the phallic exception (castration), woman is a non-universal which admits of no exception. Woman is compared to truth, since both partake of the logic of the not-all (there is no such thing as all women; it is impossible to say ‘the whole truth’)”.

²³ Stacey Keltner (2011:24) describes Kristeva’s notion of the semiotic as sharing certain characteristics of both the Real and the Imaginary, as being “excessive to language (like the real) and yet structured by it (like the imaginary)”.

also the space where it is possible to challenge the current phallogocentric monopoly on sublimation by acknowledging the disruptive effect of unconscious drives on meaning-making/signification, as ‘subjectivity in processes’.²⁴ The significance of the semiotic *chora* as a feminine and specific maternal space subverts the historical dualistic interpretation of mind (masculine as culture) versus body (female as nature).²⁵

Accompanying Kristeva’s theory of the semiotic *chora* is her notion of abjection (1982) which informs my interpretation, via artwork, of a harmful association with the maternal body (the original signifier) as abject due to castration anxiety. The abject and its association with the (m)Other represent loss and non-being as it is an unconscious reminder of a previous existence, prior to the establishment of imaginary borders between the self and the other by means of societal laws, codes and rituals (Kristeva, 1982). The ambiguous threat of the loss of boundaries, and the desire for that same subjective dissolution into the maternal (described by Freud as the oceanic feeling), which is never finally overcome, results in the apparent need to constantly repress a disorientating threat of liminality and endorses misogyny. My reappraisal of maternal subjectivity, therefore, includes the detrimental interpretation of separation from the mother, who serves as “a screen for castration anxiety”, which is problematic if not impossible, for women due to their identification with the maternal image, leading to an “internalisation of the maternal body” (Kristeva, 1982:28-29). Kristeva’s proposal that the ‘Other’ exists in the unconscious of everyone, indicating that we are all strangers to ourselves, facilitates conceptualisation of an inclusive subjectivity within the social world (Oliver, 1997; Moi, 1986).

This brief outline of the psychoanalytic and feminist theories that inform my practice also serves to critically frame the Afrikaner constructs of femininity that I outline in the next two chapters. The historical context, within which the enduring *volksmoeder* imago evolved in the masculine Symbolic of Afrikaner culture, was one of repeated trauma and displacement

²⁴ According to Evans (1996:200), Freud interprets sublimation to be “a process in which the libido is channelled into apparently non-sexual activities such as artistic creation and intellectual work. Sublimation thus functions as a socially acceptable escape valve for excess sexual energy which would otherwise have to be discharged in socially unacceptable forms (perverse behaviour) or in neurotic symptoms”. Lacan, according to Evans (1996:200): “follows Freud in emphasising the fact that the element of social recognition is central to the concept, since it is only insofar as the drives are diverted towards socially valued objects that they can be said to be sublimated”. Lacan however, according to Evans (1996:200-201), states that “sublimation involves the redirection of the drive to a different (non-sexual) object”, and therefore, “what changes is not the object but its position in the structure of fantasy”, and more specifically “sublimation relocates an object in the position of the THING. The Lacanian formula for sublimation is thus that ‘it raises an object...to the dignity of the Thing’”.

²⁵ Semiotic activity according to Kristeva, “is the mark of drives that stem from the body”, and the drives are already social in the pre-oedipal body, because “within the semiotic body there is already an experience of otherness that prefigures the other in the mirror even as it sets it up” (Oliver, 1993:32).

which necessitated positions of subservience and sublimation in my female ancestors. This dissertation, and my practice, can be read as a more agentic and active revolt against the lack inscribed by these disabling constructs of femininity.

Chapter 3

3. An overview of the history of the Afrikaner people (1652-1961)

In this chapter I provide a condensed overview of, firstly, the genesis of the Afrikaner (1652-1836), secondly the exodus of Dutch-speaking burghers from the British Cape Colony (1835-1846), thirdly the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) (where I focus on the experiences of women in the concentration camps in order to provide a context in support of my re-storying), and lastly the mobilisation of the twentieth century Afrikaner (1910-1961). I rely on a selection of existing historical research to inform my re-appraisal of the subject positions of Boer/Afrikaner women. Ricoeur advises that it is impossible to give a definitive account of the past and although “traces of the past remain”, there is, invariably, always “something pertinent to a historical topic that is left aside, unnoticed, or that has simply vanished” (cited in Bernard Dauenhauer & David Pellauer, 2011:26). I therefore acknowledge that no interpretation of historical events is definitive. This study does not include an investigation of the impact of British and Afrikaner colonialism on indigenous South Africans. Christopher Saunders (2009:305) points out that the *trekkers* “took into the interior ideas of master-servant relations”, with detrimental outcomes. While this is acknowledged as a major factor in the psyche of the Afrikaner, and a major structuring principle in the colonial and apartheid Symbolic, my concern is with gender relations within the Afrikaner fold.

Susanna Smit’s narrative occurs within the frame of the exodus from the British occupied Cape Colony. This intransigent event by a cultural group as yet poorly defined later became one of the dominant Grand Narratives of Afrikaner nationalist mobilisations after the Anglo-Boer War which had a major impact on how the story of Susanna’s life was narrated. This later appropriation of her experiences by a generation of historians (to bolster Afrikaner nationalist aspirations) must be separated from the actual event. My brief historical account of the genesis of the Afrikaner serves to show how, at the time of Susanna’s life experiences, Afrikaner identity was not as well formed as later narratives would suggest. The early context of the Afrikaner (pre-Trek) reveals that the cultural identity of the Afrikaner was as yet unformed at the time of the Trek, and must be offset against the monolithic and hegemonic constructs of early twentieth century Afrikaner historians (particularly in the build-up to the 1938 centenary celebrations). It is within these cultural formations that Susanna’s often abject diaries which recount not only her battle to survive but also her own ideological interpellation

as a woman in a precarious neo-Calvinist male-dominated environment, is refigured to construct the *volksmoeder* myth. This later reformulation demonstrates that the *volksmoeder* ideal is part ideological fabrication and part fact. I propose that it served to contain and frame the performance of femininity for generations of Afrikaner women, including my grandmother and mother, and even me. It is important to note that the *volksmoeder* myth arose *after* the Great Trek and Anglo-Boer War, in response to it. This myth, which I explore in some length, reveals a great deal of ambiguity about the ‘essential nature’ of Afrikaner women insofar as they are depicted as both victims (of British imperialism as well as suffering the hardships imposed by the African continent, including disease, hostile attacks and wild animals) and devoted, resilient and pragmatic survivors. This ambiguous trope provided them access, albeit compromised, to the Symbolic realm.

Trekker women bore and raised children under extremely challenging conditions and were exposed to substantial danger. They were required to assist alongside men in the defence against attacks from the indigenous people. During the Anglo-Boer War women took on the roles of their husbands and managed farms whilst taking care of their children. The women who escaped internment during the war evaded capture by surviving in the *veld* with their children for nearly two years. The later figuration of Afrikaner women as victims is therefore ambiguous, and offset against the role of ‘staunch protector of Afrikaner independence’ ascribed to *Voortrekker* and Boer women by later historians. This role was not inaccurate as such, but it denied what it cost a woman such as Susanna personally – a cost that her diaries clearly reveal.

3.1. An overview of the genesis of the Afrikaner people (1652-1836)

The construction of physical and conceptual boundaries and the creation of a hierarchy of differences are synonymous with the power of colonisation. The belief in hierarchical race and gender distinctions (which also occurred in Europe, North America and various European colonies), an ambiguous identification with land and the African continent, a strong reliance on a Christian identity, and the pre-condition for exclusive autonomy and self-determination are already evident in the genesis of the early ‘Afrikaner’. In his biography of Afrikaner people, Hermann Giliomee (2003:xiii) identifies the genesis of the Afrikaner in “the Cape of Good Hope, a settlement founded in 1652 by the Dutch East India Company (*Vereenigde*

Oost-Indische Compagnie) at the tip of Africa”.²⁶ Giliomee (2003:1) narrows their “humble beginnings” down to “noon on a summer’s day in December 1658” when the commander of the refreshment station, one Johan Anthonisz van Riebeeck, was handed a petition in which a small group of disgruntled burghers stated their grievances. Sheila Patterson (1957:3) identifies 1657 as a specific birth year, when the settlers “overflowed” the wild almond hedge and subsequent physical boundaries created by the VOC. Welsh (200:500) regards Simon Van Der Stel, who arrived in October 1679, to be their founding father as the use of the term Afrikaner came into use during his term of governance. Whereas Roger Beck (2000: 30) claims that a free-burgher Hendrik Bibault, was the first person to refer to himself as an “*Afrikaander*”, and that more free-burghers subsequently identified with the term “*Afrikaander*”. This is in contrast to VOC officials and servants who identified with a European identity.²⁷ Clearly, the term Afrikaner and their identification with a cohesive ethnic identity cannot be pinpointed to a specific date as there are many contributing factors over a significant time span that led to the formation of Afrikaner identity.

According to Beck (2000:27), the VOC released nine employees from their contracts in April 1657 exempting them from “land taxes for twelve years, and gave them farms in the area of present day Rondebosch as free-burghers, or citizens”. In exchange they were required to provide fresh meat and wheat (Beck, 2000:27). They also had to serve in a burgher militia. Their numbers increased slowly with the arrival of retired VOC employees, as well as Dutch, German and French colonists who integrated with the community (Beck, 2000:27).²⁸ The free-burghers soon became disgruntled though, partly due to the fact that the Company forbade trade with the KhoiKhoi²⁹ or trade of cattle amongst each other without previous permission from the authorities.³⁰ With the above came a new sense of political consciousness and white inhabitants of the Cape either identified with the VOC, or the free-burgher community.

In 1652 the first slaves were brought to the Cape settlement. There was no strict racial division during the first 75 years with the result that racial mixing occurred frequently

²⁶ Forthwith referred to as the VOC.

²⁷ The term *Afrikaander* should not be confused with Afrikaner (refer to footnote no 1).

²⁸ “Van Riebeeck’s step to release some servants to farm as ‘free burghers’ sprang from the VOC’s desire to save money, not from any wish to provide an island of liberty for some of its employees. ‘Free burghers’ were released from their contract with the Company, but continued to be subject to the Company’s regulations for the Cape settlement and the decisions of the Cape authorities” (Giliomee, 2003:6).

²⁹ The Khoikhoi, also referred to as Khoekhoe, are historical indigenous residents of the area.

³⁰ The burghers felt entitled to enjoy the same citizen status as their counterparts in the Netherlands, and were unwilling to accept their subordination to the VOC. However, the VOC, which was a sovereign power in its own right, felt equally justified in withdrawing privileges previously granted to the Burghers.

(Giliomee, 2012:35).³¹ The shortage of European women in newly settled areas also led to inter-racial mixing.³² Apart from stable, inter-racial relationships, as a result of marriage between white men and light-skinned slave or Khoi women, “there was also large scale miscegenation in the form of casual sex, especially in the slave lodge, frequented by local European and Chinese men, as well as sailors and soldiers” (Giliomee, 2003:18). According to Giliomee (2003:18), “[p]eople of mixed racial origins were prominent both as burghers and free blacks and did not appear to suffer any *racial* discrimination”.³³

Giliomee (2012:37) proposes that early women at the colonial Cape were self-confident as they enjoyed equal rights to men. Female and male children shared equally in inheritance. Women in the colony, according to Elizabeth Van Heyningen (2013: 32), enjoyed more status and displayed more confidence than Victorian women, as they owned property based on a system of inheritance. Under Roman Dutch law women were allowed to divorce their husbands and also enjoyed a considerable amount of free time due to the practice of ‘wet nursing’ by slave women (Giliomee, 2012:37-39).³⁴

In contrast to life in the Colony, early free-burghers and *trekboers* lived isolated lives in often dangerous conditions. This led to the influence of Dutch pietistic readings on *trekboer* and free-burgher women. Christina Landman (2009:6) proposes that loneliness, as well as harsh and unsafe conditions led women such as Catharina Allegonda Van Lier (1768-1801), Hester Venter (1852) and Susanna Smit (1799-1863) to rely on Dutch pietistic readings such as *Het gerookte riet* (The smoking reed) for their spiritual needs. This was in the hope that they would “be saved from dangerous circumstances” if they shed their “personal sins” (Landman, 2009:6). Andries Raath (2014:108) argues that stressful living conditions combined with the influence of German Pietism and the pietistic tendencies of Dutch Second Reformation religious culture in the interior, had a significant influence on female members of the

³¹ According to Beck (2000:28), the first slaves to arrive were from Africa, but soon “most of the colony’s slaves came from Dutch colonies in Batavia, India, and Ceylon. According to Elphick and Giliomee (1979:16), the settlers who did not own many slaves turned to the Khoikhoi to forcibly ‘augment’ their slave force.

³² Giliomee (2003:18) argues that “there was no rigid racial division, particularly during the first seventy-five years of Company rule”, although some correspondence existed “between legal status, colour and religious identity”.

³³ “J. A. Heese, a genealogical researcher, has estimated that seven percent of Afrikaner families have a non-European *stammoeder* or progenitress.”; “During the early years the situation was fluid enough for some children born from unions of non-Europeans (sic) parents to be accepted into the European community.” (Giliomee 2003: 18). “Mixing with ‘native’ women outside wedlock was largely restricted to newly settled areas or beyond the frontier.” One estimate puts the proportion of frontiersmen married to or living with a non-European at less than a tenth.” (Giliomee, 2003:40). Mixed marriages between European men and slave women were made difficult as a man had to pay a considerable amount in order to free a slave woman (Giliomee, 2012:42).

³⁴ Mistresses of slaves as rulers of the household enjoyed a privileged life, unlike their counterparts in the interior who often shared homes with other families and livestock (Giliomee, 2012:45).

community. Susanna Smit fervently identified with a form of mystical pietism, as will become clear in my discussion of her diary.

By the early eighteenth century, many of the free-burghers, in search of better economic opportunities, began to make use of the loan farm system offered by the government (Giliomee, 2003:30). Although the burghers still planted crops, they were starting to concentrate on stock farming, which resulted in the need for new grazing for their stock and the subsequent expansion and migration inland. This, naturally, led to clashes with indigenous South African inhabitants. Schooling for *trekboer* (migrant farmers) children was rudimentary and they had to rely on travelling teachers who visited various farms from time to time.³⁵ According to Beck (2000:37), the *trekboers* were Calvinists, “a people of the Old Testament. They took their law from the Bible, not the government”.

After the annexation of the Cape by the British in 1806 the relationship between the burghers and the new government was tenuous at best, with little trust and respect on both sides. The British integrated Roman-Dutch with English law, made English the spoken language, and established circuit courts, which extended deep into the interior (Van Jaarsveld, 1975:71-73). The circuit courts were not well received by the burghers as slaves and employees were now allowed to testify against their employers, and proceedings were conducted in English (Beck, 2000:46).³⁶ In 1815 Khoikhoi troops killed Johannes Bezuidenhout when he resisted arrest for mistreating a servant. In response, Bezuidenhout’s brother and other free-burghers “declared war on the local government” in what became known as the Slagtersnek rebellion (Beck, 2000:46). The authorities retaliated by hanging five of the ringleaders.³⁷ The Slagtersnek rebellion, which had a profound influence on the burghers, contributed to their resolution to move inland away from British rule. A Slagtersnek monument was erected on 9 March 1916 (100 years after the incident) in honour of the men who died resisting British domination.

³⁵ According to Beck, (2000:36), “migrant farmers were not lazy and unwilling to do the hard labor required for intensive agriculture. They were simply successfully adapting to the economic conditions. Grazing land was cheap and virtually unlimited, whereas capital, land, and labor for grain and grape production were scarce. Hunting, trade, and livestock farming afforded the only means to make a living in the interior”. The *trekboers*, also referred to as frontier *boers*, led self-sufficient and isolated lives as family units. Theirs was a culturally insecure and rudimentary existence, far removed from the relative cultural oasis to the south.

³⁶ The burghers also objected to a military frontier force consisting of “Khoikhoi and other ‘colored’ troops serving under white officers”, as well as to a shortage of land (Giliomee, 2003:85).

³⁷ According to Dunbar Moodie (1975:3-4), the five men were hung in front of their wives and children in an inhumane manner, as the gallows which collapsed during the process had to be hoisted up again while the men were being strangled to death.

Apart from physical danger, the burghers also feared the idea of equality of all before the law. The religious instruction of Khoikhoi by the missionaries Johannes van der Kemp and James Read, and the prospect of confirming and accepting non-white people into Christian churches, caused further anger.³⁸ As in the rest of the world, the notion of slavery and the ownership of a human life by another were losing popularity in the Cape in the early nineteenth century.³⁹ The British government abolished slavery in 1830, stating that slaves had to serve a four-year apprenticeship before being freed, at the same time promising monetary compensation to slave owners although not always honouring their promise.

Giliomee (2003:144) argues that the direct causes that led to the burghers' decision to leave the Colony were marginalisation, a shortage of secure land for farming and the lack of a labour force after the abolishment of slavery. When slavery was abolished many farmers faced bankruptcy as they had been using their slaves as collateral.⁴⁰ J. Alton Templin (1968:284) views the reasons for the exodus from the Cape as being rooted in the development of "a composite of various grievances, rumours and interpretations" as well as "misunderstandings" amongst the people of the frontier. According to Floris Albertus Van Jaarsveld (1975:74-75), the arrival of the British settlers in 1820 who, due to their large numbers, could not be integrated into the local community, as well as the prospect of Anglicisation, threatened the burghers' tenuous identification with their distant roots in the Netherlands, the Dutch Reformed church and their spoken language.⁴¹ Their identity was also linked to their spoken language, which was a form of Dutch, "that had over time undergone a

³⁸ Dr J T Van der Kemp was the first missionary from the London Missionary Society founded by British Protestant churches in order to challenge the dominance of the Anglican Church, who viewed them as dissidents. He established his first LMS mission station in 1799 at Ngqika's Great Place in the Tyhume Valley and later at the Mgqukhwebe River. He left just over a year later, where after he accepted the ministry of the Church in Graaff-Reinet. His sympathy for the Khoikhoi and the growing animosity between the Boers and Khoikhoi created a threatening atmosphere that forced Van der Kemp and Read to flee from Graaff-Reinet early in 1802 (Giliomee, 2003:96-98).

³⁹ Various other factors contributed to discontent amongst the stock farmers, such as Ordinance 50, passed in 1828, stating that all inhabitants of the Cape were regarded equal before the law. This exonerated the Khoisan from carrying passes, prevented the indenturing of Khoisan children, and recognized equal rights for the Khoikhoi (Giliomee, 2003:105). In spite of the above recognition of rights, some farmers still paid very poor wages, resulting in impoverishment of their workers.

⁴⁰ According to Beck (2000:52), "the freed slaves would have full legal equality with Whites under the provisions of Ordinance 50. The Emancipation Act provided for compensation to slave owners — but only payable in London and only at about one-third of the slaves' actual market value. Many Cape slave owners never received any compensation".

⁴¹ Van Jaarsveld (1975:74-75) proposes that this resulted in: "firstly, *political opposition* in the form of a *mass removal* of a section of their ranks from the British colony in 1836 – The Great Trek – and secondly, a *cultural* and *national revival* among those who remained behind under British rule during the 1870's which led to the formation of their own political party, the *Afrikanerbond*, which would uphold the identity of the Afrikaners as a national group in South Africa against the onslaughts of the influence of the more influential English culture". The Afrikaner Bond was formed in 1881 by reverend S J Du Toit (Totius).

limited form of creolization or deviation from the basic Dutch structure”, as a result of formal and informal interaction between people of various descent (Giliomee, 2003:52-53).⁴²

The situation became increasingly troublesome, with mistrust between the frontier colonists, Xhosa and the British officials gaining momentum. The interpretation of these shared socio-economic experiences of poverty and exclusion amongst the early settlers provided an initial and fertile ground for the consequent birth of a creation myth, for an existential and emerging ethnic Afrikaner identity. These early emigrants (known as the *trekboers*) were followed by a more organised exodus, subsequently referred to as The Great Trek, and its participants the *Voortrekkers*.

3.2. The Great Trek (1836-1838)

The history of The Great Trek can be interpreted as an uncanny narrative overflowing with existential pathos. It is an historical account of a fragmented community in search of a new home upon leaving their birthplace where their precarious hold on autonomy was being compromised. Physical and metaphorical borders, which had previously provided a sense of tenure and sovereignty, were under threat, and their autonomy was diminishing. Anne McClintock (1993:62) views the cultural identity of the burghers of the time, as follows:

[t]o begin with, however, Afrikaners had no monolithic identity, no common historic purpose, and no single unifying language. They were a disunited, scattered people, speaking a medley of High Dutch and local dialects, with smatterings of the slave, Nguni and Khoisan languages – scorned as the ‘*kombuistaal*’ (kitchen-language) of house-servants, slaves and women. Afrikaners had quite literally to invent themselves.

Feeling disenfranchised, marginalised and lacking a cohesive sense of ethnic identity, the burghers took the decision to cut the cord and create a physical distance and a conceptual boundary between them and the ruling government by journeying further inland.⁴³ According

⁴² According to Beck (2000:53), “Sir John Cradock initiated some anglicization policies in the 1810s, but the real impetus came from Lord Somerset after 1822. He brought in Scottish schoolteachers to teach in free public schools. Students were given incentives for using English, which alienated many Afrikaner parents. In 1824 English became the official language of government. Afrikaners particularly resented the anglicized legal system, which they considered not only too liberal (because slaves could testify against masters) but also nearly unintelligible”.

⁴³ Forthwith referred to as, the *Voortrekkers*.

to Hendrik Bernardus Thom (1965:89), a previous rector of Stellenbosch University (1954), more and more people had become unwilling to listen to the government's idle talk and decided to *trek* into the unknown, resulting in more wagon wheels starting to roll northwards. De Klerk (1975:25) draws a comparison between the American Declaration of Independence (July 4 1776) and Retief's Manifesto (1937) (Manifesto of the Trekker Community as a whole). This document reveals the importance of race in the construction of a white Afrikaner identity, as implied by complaints about the alleged "abuse of authority on the part of the overlord, in which *inter alia*, as they saw it, the barbarous and destructive behaviour of a still primitive people are favoured, to the general disadvantage of the Europeans living near them" (De Klerk, 1975:25). A substantive difference in the two Manifestos, according to De Klerk (1975:26), is that the American Declaration constitutes an incitement to revolution, whereas the Retief Manifesto constitutes a revolt, not a revolution, which therefore makes the *trekkers* rebels and not revolutionaries.⁴⁴

According to Van Jaarsveld (1975:119), unlike the American expansion into the west during which pioneers maintained ties with the Government, the *trekkers* perceived themselves to be *emigranten* (emigrants) who had cut ties with their British rulers. It is significant that the Voortrekker woman, Susanna Smit, referred to her fellow *trekkers* as *emigranten* in her diaries, which communicates the impression that they did not enjoy a cohesive cultural identity at the time, but rather were defined largely in terms of their collective search for a homeland. Some sense of cohesion existed, however, based on shared experiences of common dangers and struggles, *inter alia*, the threat of predatory animals, inhospitable terrain, illness, swollen rivers and inevitable tragic clashes with the original occupants of the land who, unsurprisingly, resisted the invasion of their territory with loss of life on both sides. Although referred to as The Great Trek, the *trek* actually consisted of various parties led by appointed leaders, who travelled in different directions in search for land and freedom from British oppression.⁴⁵

The long journey in search of a new home was carried out in ox wagons, serving as temporary homes. Wagon sails provided precarious shelter from the elements, serving as

⁴⁴ Retief issued a Manifesto, which was published in The Grahams town Journal on 2 February 1937, in which the grievances and reason for the Trek were recorded.

⁴⁵ Jochen Petzhold (2007:116) states that the Trek was a heterogeneous movement by various groups and their respective leaders starting in 1935, and the national 'myth' of the Great Trek has been created subsequently as part of an agenda of white nation building using cultural artefacts, film and literature, and demonizing indigenous Africans. Beck (2000:65) states that the Great Trek started in late 1835 when various parties (consisting of relatives and neighbours), "under Louis Trichardt and Janse van Rensburg crossed the Orange river and headed towards the Transvaal. Parties led by Hendrik Potgieter, Gert Martitz and Piet Uys" soon followed.

protective membranes between them and the numerous dangers encountered on the journey.⁴⁶ The arduous passage and close reliance on one another made for strong identifications that would leave an indelible mark on later Afrikaner identity. Prescriptive gender roles and social codes, within their patriarchal Christian community, were interpreted as legitimate and ordained by God which formed part of an Afrikaner ethnic identity in the making.⁴⁷ According to Van Heyningen (2013a:33), the *trekkers* relied on the *Statebybel* (State Bible) “which included marginal commentaries summarising reformed doctrine”, in which a patriarchal and family-centred theology was encouraged. Although the division of gender roles within their patriarchal culture was strict, women formed a driving force behind the *trek* (Giliomee, 2003:169). *Voortrekker* women’s insistence on freedom from British rule became a popular theme in a subsequent nationalist *volksmoeder* construct. According to Van Heyningen (2013a:33), men and women of the time sustained distinct gender roles, “with Christianity providing the sanction for the subordination of women”. It was within the context of this historically precarious patriarchal event of The Great Trek, that Susanna Smit’s diaries were written.

The *trekkers* who decided to join the exodus did so against the wishes of The Dutch Reformed Church. No official *predikant* (minister) was prepared to accompany the various groups on their *trek* inland (Ransford, 1972:85). Susanna Smit, the central figure of my research, enters the narrative at this point, for the *trekkers* had to reluctantly rely on the services of Susanna’s husband, Erasmus Smit, as a spiritual leader. Susanna Smit (Gerrit Maritz’s sister), who was living in Graaff Reinet with her husband Erasmus Smit at the time, joined the Maritz trek with her husband in a wagon on loan from her brother. The *trekkers* conducted regular religious services during their journey, as mentioned by a visitor to the Maritz trek: “service is publicly performed thrice on every Sunday and also on Wednesday and Saturday evenings” (Schoeman, 2003:108). Although never ordained as a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church, Erasmus Smit served as religious leader to the *trekkers*, based on his missionary experience (1809-1829) after brief training by the Netherlands Missionary

⁴⁶ According to Binckes (2013:225), the wagons were “usually six metres long and two metres tall and served as bedroom, lounge, church and fort. Many of the Boers could not sleep all members of the family or group in their wagon because it was loaded with all their worldly goods. Consequently, they added makeshift tents to the wagons at night using sailcloth attached to the wagon’s side”. The ox wagon, which served as a home away from home contained a bed, a *kist* (wooden container) in which linen, the Bible and other valuables were kept, along with clothing, as well as kitchen utensils, medicine and a small supply of food.

⁴⁷ Peter Berger (1967:39) interprets the role of religious legitimization in patriarchal cultures, and its practical application of normative social roles in everyday life, as transcending the personal “by virtue of its relationship to the heavenly father who instituted on earth the order to which the role belongs”.

Society. Susanna Smit's role in the *trekker* community was thus one of helpmeet to the religious leader of the group. The role religion has generally played in human societies, was to enable a community to imagine a sacred link with the infinite, as defined by Peter Berger (1967:27):

[e]very society is engaged in the never completed enterprise of building a humanly meaningful world. Cosmization implies the identification of this humanly meaningful world with the world as such...historically, most of man's worlds have been sacred worlds...religion has played a strategic part in the human enterprise of world-building.

The following extract from Susanna Smit's diary, in which she reflects on the journey, demonstrates the belief that they were a suffering people being led away from English oppression, under guidance of God (Book nr. 4:34): "*de Heere leide het Kroos der martelaren uit van onder Ingelsche verdrukking*" (The Lord led his progeny of martyrs away from English oppression).⁴⁸

In lieu of the hyper-religious inclination of Susanna Smit's diaries I provide a brief overview of revisionist interpretations of the religious proclivity of the *trekkers*. Although historians differ on the importance of a Calvinistic influence on Afrikaners it is generally accepted that twentieth century nationalists relied on mythical interpretations of historical eras, such as the Great Trek (1836) and the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), to build a nationalist identity. Van Jaarsveld (1975:79) puts the *Voortrekkers'* identification with religion down to their marginalisation by the British, who saw them as a threat to British rule, and due to the influence of a British interpretation of class and race with regard to indigenous inhabitants.⁴⁹ This was followed by a more 'philanthropic liberalism' in the second half of the eighteenth century, due to the Enlightenment and a Protestant revival in Britain which led to the formation of missionary societies in South Africa who preached "the universal equality of all mankind" (Van Jaarsveld, 1975:80).

Oliver Ransford (1972:11) ascribes the *trekkers'* strong religious identification and intolerance of others to their relative physical isolation and a typical nineteenth century European belief that "white men were the highest image and likeness of the Lord", and "that

⁴⁸ My translation.

⁴⁹ During the era of colonisation, the interpretation of the 'Other' as "Heathens" by Western Europeans had catastrophic consequences for Native populations, such as the killing and subjugation of Native Americans in the United States, as well as the practice of slavery by European colonisers (Van Jaarsveld, 1975:79-80).

they of all people enjoyed a special relationship with God”.⁵⁰ Templin (1968:283) suggests that the *Voortrekkers*’ interpretation of the unwelcome changes in their previous, fairly self-sufficient lifestyle caused them “to systemize concepts of themselves around certain Biblical events which they felt reflected their own situation”. Johan Kinghorn (1994:403) interprets the psychological roots of the Afrikaner’s identification with Biblical creation myths as ‘bravado’ which “was not born from an immutable belief in the superiority of their race but from insecurity. Theirs was the fanaticism of the lonely”. According to Dunbar Moodie (1975:viii), “[t]he divine agent of Afrikaner civil faith is Christian and Calvinist - an active sovereign God - who calls the elect, who promises and punishes, who brings forth life from death in the course of history”. Michael Hughey (1987:24-25) proposes that the *trekkers*’ search for an ethnic identity and sovereignty was fixed on “the only meaningful ideological framework they had: religion”. Hughey (1987:24) suggests that the Great Trek was experienced as a predestined Biblical exodus “away from the British Pharaoh” with a *Trek* leader viewed as “Moses”, and the Zulu people as “Canaanites deserving to be crushed, or as the cursed children of Ham destined for servitude”.⁵¹

De Klerk (1975:125) criticises the notion of a strong Afrikaner Calvinistic identification as there are many revisions of Calvinism that influenced their religious inclination, such as “the Synod of Dort early in the seventeenth century; the rise of Puritanism; and the neo-Calvinism of Kuyper, Dooyeweerd and others”. This is supported by André Du Toit (1985:216-217), who proposes that the early *trekboers* and the *Voortrekkers* lived in virtual isolation cut off from the rest of the world without organised schools or churches:

...up to the 1830s it could still be said that the religious practices of the frontier farmers were centred on Bible readings within the patriarchal family unit and on the quarterly gatherings for Communion, or *Nachtmaal*, in much the same way it had been for their fathers and grandfathers – and for the *Voortrekkers* this continued for a generation more.

⁵⁰ “The historian, Dr George McCall Theal, puts the cause of this concept very well, when he wrote that each Afrikaner lived ‘under such skies as those under which Abraham lived’. His occupation was the same, he understood the imagery of the Hebrew writers more perfectly than anyone in Europe would understand it, for he spoke to him of his daily life” (Ransford, 1972:11).

⁵¹ Coupe (2009:66) understands the primary Biblical myth of deliverance, consisting of the book of Exodus (Revelations being the secondary deliverance myth), to be the earliest version of the deliverance myth in Western culture. A deliverance myth is always to be “oriented forwards”, and although “in its original religious form, it assumes a hierarchy, in the form of heaven above, it also assumes a horizon, in the form of a promised land, or messianic kingdom”, therefore offering “hope that God’s chosen people will be liberated from oppression; in doing so, it assumes that history is not only purposeful but also redemptive”

According to Du Toit (2011:217), from the 1830s the impact on the Cape Dutch Reformed church by missionary clergy from the Netherlands “came to play a dominant role in the Cape Synod”, more specifically “its specific tradition of orthodox evangelical piety.”⁵² The first *Vrije Grondwet* (Free Constitution), drawn up at the *Vetrivier* (Vet River) on 5 June 1837, stated that all members of the *Volksraad*, (People’s Party) as members of the *Gereformeerde Kerk* (Reformed Church), were to immediately resign from and no longer have any association with the *sendelings genootschap van Engeland* (missionary society of England) (Preller, 1918:300).⁵³

Du Toit (1985:236) finds the ascription of a strong Calvinistic identification to the *trekkers* as unfounded and derides it as a ‘historical myth’, suggesting that a nationalist interpretation of being a ‘chosen people’ can also be found in the histories of various populations, such as “English and American claims of being covenanted with God”.⁵⁴ According to Carli Coetzee (1983:148), historical interpretations of the *trekkers*’ folk theology is largely based on their religious leader Erasmus Smit’s diary, which should be read as an account of his personal project to “establish himself as an authority in the emigrant community”, and not as an account of the religion of the *trekkers*. Historians have, therefore, mistakenly interpreted his diary as an account of a unified religion of the community.⁵⁵

On their arrival in Natal, after the difficult crossing of the Drakensberg, the *trekkers* initially intended to name their new home ‘New Eden’. However, their spiritual leader Erasmus Smit unsuccessfully tried to convince them to adopt the name ‘New Holland’ instead. Their ambiguous identification with the African continent, and nostalgic yearning for a sense of familiarity and sanctity associated with their ancestral country, bear out the fact that they

⁵² Du Toit (2011:952) proposes that “Afrikaner nationalism is less the product of its unique cultural roots than the result of the ideological labors of a modernizing elite seeking to ensure social cohesion in transitional times”. According to Hofmeyr (1988:522-526), the historian Gustav Preller as editor of the newspapers *Die Volkstem* (1903) and *Die Brandvlag* (1910), played a large role in subsequent cultural fabrications of nationalism based on his interpretations of The Great Trek and the Anglo-Boer War. Hexham (2011:196), claims that twentieth century nationalists such as Hertzog, Kamp, Du Toit and Postma in opposition to the more ‘liberal’ Botha and Smuts, were responsible for popularising Dutch Calvinist ideology (based on the doctrine of Abraham Kuyper) as part their ‘apartheid’ agenda of the separation of races. Du Toit (1985:218) interprets subsequent historical interpretations as follows: “the rediscovery of the past also amounted to a radical reinterpretation of the past, for it is typical of a nationalist consciousness to see all history in nationalist terms as the protohistory of the ‘nation’”.

⁵³ “1. *Wij die gereformeerde ledematen zijn begeerig dat een eider, geen en uitgezondert, zal moeten afwijken van allen den sendelings genootschap van Engeland, en verder daarvoor opentlijk bedanken*” (Preller, 1918:300).

⁵⁴ Du Toit (1985:234) concludes that: “in a comparative and historical perspective the reputation of Afrikaner Calvinism is quite overblown: it is meagre in substance and its historical foundation is shallow”.

⁵⁵ According to Coetzee, (1993:162): “[m]issionary ideology provided men like Smit with a means of advancement, as well as a way of legitimating political and personal power. His journal can be read as a document of his attempts at establishing himself as the spiritual leader of the group, by presenting himself as the Moses of the wandering tribe”.

were a displaced people searching for an ethnic identity and homeland. The *Voortrekkers* claimed the Republic of Natalia for themselves (1938), their justification being a treaty between the respective Boer and Zulu leaders Retief and Dingaan, as well as victories during skirmishes with the Zulu people (Van Jaarsveld, 1975:124).⁵⁶ According to Giliomee (2003:167), the *Volksraad* (people's assembly) "introduced a radical form of self-rule with annual elections, white male franchise, and frequent memoranda or appeals to the *Volksraad*". The small *trekker* community's commitment to self-government and freedom did not extend to female members, it also did not include the indigenous South Africans of the area, who were either coerced into labour, or forced out of the area (Giliomee, 2003:167).

After Natal was formally annexed as a British Colony 12 May 1843, one of the clauses declaring "that the protection of the law, in letter and in substance, be extended impartially to all alike", caused great alarm amongst the *trekkers*, especially concerning the ownership of land (Schoeman 2003:144). According to Giliomee (2003:168), the more prosperous members of the community, as landowners, were amenable to British rule, whereas the poor and illiterate objected vociferously. The division amongst the community members was also based on gender, and women who had enjoyed more authority during the *trek*, objected strongly to British rule (Giliomee, 2003:169).

During commissioner Cloete's meeting with members of the *Volksraad* on 8 June 1843 he encountered about 400 - 500 people (also a number of people from outside the district) including women who had crowded into the courtroom (Schoeman 2003:144). According to Giliomee (2003:169), a delegation of women "gave Cloete a baptism of fire, with the redoubtable Susanna Smit playing a leading role". Karel Schoeman (2003:144) states that it was during this meeting that Susanna Smit "came to the fore". Robin Binckes (2013:461) states that Susanna Smit was the spokesperson of the group of women who, with the widow Mieta Kruger, voiced the opinion that the women were prepared to "cross the Drakensberg Mountains on our bare feet, to meet either liberty or death, rather than to bow to a government that has treated us as the British government has done". In a letter to the honourable Montague, 8 August 1843, commissioner Cloete (cited in Bird, 1965:258-259) reports on the above incident as follows:

The state of suspense in which I was kept was agreeably relieved by a formal deputation which I received from the standing committee of the ladies of

⁵⁶ Giliomee (2003:166) states that the Republic was established in 1839.

Pietermaritzburg, headed by Mrs. Smit, the wife of a person officiating as missionary. The spokeswoman commenced by declaring that, in consideration of the battles in which they had been engaged with their husbands, they had obtained a promise that they would be entitled to a voice in all matters concerning the state of this country; that they had claimed this privilege, and although now repelled by the Volksraad, they had been deputed to express their fixed determination never to yield to British authority; that they were fully aware that resistance would be of no avail, but they would walk out by the Draaksberg barefooted, to die in freedom, as death was dearer to them than the loss of liberty

I endeavoured (but in vain) to impress upon them that such a liberty as they seemed to dream of had never been recognised in any civil society; that I regretted that, as married ladies, they boasted of a freedom which even in asocial state they could not claim, and that, however much I sympathised in their feelings, I considered it a disgrace on their husbands to allow them such a state of freedom. After an interview that lasted a couple of hours, they left me, still more excited than they had been when they first arrived, and departed exclaiming that their shibboleth was liberty or death.

According to Schoeman (2003:144-146), the following report, of which I am providing extracts, by an anonymous author, appeared in The Graham's Town Journal shortly after the above incident:

The Honorable Commissioner commenced by reading the proclamation in English of His Excellency the Governor, and then commenced as proposed to give a translation of it in Dutch, and to explain and comment upon it as he proceeded. This, however, was rather too much for their patience, and the endurance of his *fair* auditory gave way before he had gone two thirds of his task. Still, in spite of their evident tokens of impatience, the Commissioner continued until at length they (the women) told him they would hear no more of his address – and that their object in attending was not to hear him, but to talk themselves, and that, though they would not hear the Commissioner, they were resolved he should listen to them. They accordingly called upon Councillor [sic] Fick to read an address on *their* grievances which had been

prepared for the occasion, and to which they directed his particular attention...A great deal to this effect was uttered by the chief spokeswoman, Mrs Smidt [sic], when her husband at length endeavoured to check her volubility. But this only added fuel to the fire. To the kind expostulation of her husband – ‘*Stil, vrouw, stil toch een wynig, stil, myn kind, stil*’ (Quiet, wife, be still a little – still, my dear, still)⁵⁷, the virago vociferated, You wretch, shall I be still while you stand there silent – you boasted enough at first, but now I am obliged to take your place (the literal interpretation of the latter part of the phrase is, ‘but now I must wear the breeches’)...At this time such was the clamour and riot that nothing could be heard above the uproar. At length, however, the vocal powers of the fair became so relaxed that the Commissioner was enabled to say that if they persisted in their intention of reading their statement of grievances, in the manufacture of which it was evident that the men were as much implicated as the women, he should break up the meeting and quit the place...The amazonian assembly had taken special care not to be so defeated, and quickly informed him that he should not depart until he had heard all they had to say to him...‘See!’ said his fair tormentors, ‘he refuses to hear – though we have him here he says he will not listen to us – but he *shall* do so,’ – and, suiting the action to the word, they instantly spread forth their fair and delicate arms to prevent his egress. In vain he strove, in vain he remonstrated – to all they were obdurate, their hands were fastened on his clothes – their aprons or some other part of their dress were thrown over his face. ‘My good women’ exclaimed the British Commissioner in despair, ‘my good women, I am your own brother, and how can I deserve such treatment from you?’. ‘Yes’ said that *small* specimen of humanity, Mrs Smidt, ‘you are our brother, and why then when we have complaints will you not hear us?’.

Schoeman (2003:144) states that women had drawn up a separate petition in which they voiced their grievances, as evident in a letter by Commissioner Cloete: “[t]his petition detailed at great length, and in warm language, the miseries and sufferings which they had undergone for years past, and prayers that the meeting to which it was addressed should not recognize the authority of H. M. Commissioner”. It is, therefore, clear that although Smit and

⁵⁷ In the report the Dutch ‘*myn kind*’, which means ‘my child’, is translated as ‘my dear’.

other *trekker* women strongly identified with a nascent Afrikaner struggle for independence, they were concomitantly demanding a distinct political voice of their own in their new 'homeland'. *Trekker* women, who had struggled alongside their husbands in the *trek* to freedom, were reluctant to sacrifice their hard earned agency in the broader societal order. Their demand for a political voice could be read as an early suffragette movement. Boer women felt entitled to recognition as equal agents based on challenges and hardship they had endured during the Great Trek. Susanna displayed strong resistance in her response to her husband's indeterminacy during the public meeting, and her reaction bears evidence of her frustration with a patriarchal society who did not regard women as equal subjects. In the following discussion of the Anglo-Boer War it will become evident that Boer women displayed tremendous courage in the absence of their husbands. Their hard earned political agency achieved during the Anglo-Boer War, as in the Great Trek, was short lived when men demanded their 'rightful' places as heads of the home, and the nation once women's services were no longer needed.

Susanna Smit never left Pietermaritzburg where she died on 27 July 1863 at the age of 63, a month before her 64th birthday. I return to the narrative of her life in my discussion of her life experiences and diary in chapter 5. Maria Maritz (my grandmother) was born in 1899 at the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War, a hundred years after the birth of Susanna Smit. Maria married Cornelis Johannes Maritz, my grandfather who fought in the war, a descendent of Susanna's brother Gerrit Maritz.

3.3. The Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902)

By 1854 the Boers in the Orange Free State had declared their independence, formed their own constitution which granted men voting rights and recognised Dutch as the official language, followed by the South African Republic (*Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek*) declaring independence in 1857. This bears evidence that the *Voortrekkers*, even after many shared experiences of hardship, did not possess a cohesive cultural identity.⁵⁸ Their independence from British rule was short lived, and as the causes of the Anglo-Boer War would require a detailed discussion which is beyond the scope of this study, I hereby provide a short overview.⁵⁹ Van Jaarsveld (1975:188) and Fransjohan Pretorius (1999:13) interpret the cause of the Anglo-Boer War to ultimately be a struggle between British Imperialism and Afrikaner nationalism.⁶⁰ According to Beck (2000:92), the aim of the British was “to bring all of South Africa under Imperial rule and to gain control over South Africa’s mineral wealth”, whereas “the Afrikaners fought to defend their independence”. S. B. Spies and Gail Natrass (1994:21) view British Imperialism and expansionism, and more specifically ‘economic imperialism’, to be the essential cause of the war owing to “South Africa’s newfound wealth in diamonds and gold”.⁶¹

The war between Great Britain and the ZAR (*Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek*) broke out at five o’clock on the afternoon of 11 October 1899 when Britain rejected an ultimatum by the ZAR to withdraw British troops from their borders and the assurance that troops bound for South Africa would not embark (Pretorius, 1999:13). President Steyn of the Orange Free State, honouring his March 1897 agreement with the ZAR, joined the war (Pretorius, 1999:13). Neither party foresaw the length of the war, or the extent of casualties on both sides, or its disastrous impact on all the inhabitants of the land. Twentieth century nationalists relied extensively on the endurance and fortitude of Boer women, during the war and their

⁵⁸ According to Van Jaarsveld (1975:149), the *trekkers* could not concentrate on nation building as a result of their poor economic standing, isolation and years of *trekking* “which had split them into different groups with specific leaders”.

⁵⁹ For a detailed discussion on the Anglo Boer War refer to Thomas Pakenham (1993); Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1914); Martin Meredith (2008); Greg Cuthbertson et al (2002).

⁶⁰ Van Jaarsveld (1975:188) draws a comparison between the French inhabitants of Canada, who clung to their origins and customs when confronted by a majority of British settlers, and the Boers, who were “culturally backward in comparison with the more developed and sophisticated English speakers” who “saw Britain as their home”.

⁶¹ Cuthbertson, Grundlingh and Suttie (2002:xvi), draw a comparison between the American Civil Wars and the Anglo Boer War in the sense that in “both struggles there were strong appeals to universal principles and rights that were thought to have relevance far beyond the sites of struggle. The Confederacy fought to protect the rights of the states and a particular way of life. The Boers fought to preserve the independence of their republics”.

internment in the camps, to bolster the *volksmoeder* imago. I therefore focus on the war experiences of Boer women in the following brief overview.⁶²

3.3.1. Boer women in the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902)

The war, ostensibly, became a war against civilians who had remained behind on the farms, with the implementation of a scorched earth policy by Lord Roberts and later Lord Kitchener.⁶³ The British scorched earth policy, according to Helen Bradford (2002:41), as “retribution through devastation”, was firstly motivated by British contempt of Boers evident in a communication by the Commander-in-Chief at the War Office who stated that, as a race, they were “...worse than the Kaffir”.⁶⁴ Secondly, there was the economic and political motivation to bolster insufficient Imperial provisions, and thirdly, mere wanton destruction, raping and looting as a display of masculinity (Bradford, 2002:42).⁶⁵ The fourth was a military motivation in order to hamper Boer soldiers who relied on farms for supplies, and finally, as punishment for various perceived offences against the Crown (Bradford, 2002:43).⁶⁶ Women, who remained behind on the farms while their men went to war, were responsible for children, staff, and the running of farms, which included caring for livestock

⁶² For information on the experiences of Boer soldiers on commando refer to Spies & Nattrass’s war memoir of Jan Smuts (1994); Fransjohan Pretorius (2013); Deneys Reitz’s memoir of the war (2006).

⁶³ Pretorius (2001:21) states that a total of 34 116 Boer men, women and children died during the war; of which 27 927 deaths occurred in the concentration camps; 22 074 were children under the age of 16 (79% of all deaths in the camps); 4 177 were women over 16 years; and 1 676 were men over the age of 16 years; 6 189 Boer men died during the war, of which 3 990 were killed in combat and 924 died of illness while on commando. The deaths of women and children therefore vastly outweigh the death of Boer soldiers. The British records on deaths amongst Black people in the camps are incomplete, but according to Pretorius (2001:21), at least 14 154 deaths occurred of which 81% were children under 16 years.

⁶⁴ Various British journalists of the time, as well as the historian Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, were fond of depicting Boers as uncouth, with special reference to President Paul Kruger who had received minimal schooling, not unlike the caricaturing of Jacob Zuma, the current president of South Africa, by the press and various artists. According to Nasson and Grundlingh, (2013:13), the British perceived the Boers to be primitive and at times referred to them as “Boer herds’ or ‘Boer flocks’, depictions which drew on Darwinist ideas of human evolution and placed the enemy at a sub-human level”. Van Heyningen (2013a:76) explains that in a letter by Kitchener to Brodrick “he described the Boers as ‘uncivilized Afrikaner savages with a thin white veneer’. Still worse was the Boer woman, “who slaps her great protruding belly at you and shouts”.

⁶⁵ According to Bradford, (2002:43): “Seldom, if ever, did men introduce gender, the common denominator, into their analyses. Yet the “lust” displayed by men able to exert mastery over feminized spaces, acting as brigands without fear of punishment, cries out for such analysis”. Bradford (2002: 44), states that the scorched earth policy had a powerful effect on Boer soldiers and “[t]he savage *vernielzucht* [wanton destruction] displayed by a parasitic, all-male imperial army shocked numerous observers—and was of profound significance to Boer men”.

⁶⁶ Grundlingh (2013:27-28) explains that the disastrous handling of civilians during war is an unfortunate feature of military leadership, such as in the case of the concentration camps established in Cuba during the Spanish campaign (1896-1897) in which approximately 125 000 people died. Civilians also bore the brunt in the war between the United States of America and the Philippines (1899-1902) (Grundlingh, 2013:29). According to Bradford (2002:52): “British officers who had served on the Indian frontier had been accustomed to the destruction of the towns and villages of the tribesmen as a normal act of war”, and Roberts who had served forty-one years in the Indian Army, perpetuated this form of intimidation.

and planting and harvesting of crops. Men visited their families occasionally and stocked up on supplies before returning to their respective commandos.⁶⁷

Boer women and children, including a large proportion of the Black population, were left destitute by a wide-scale destruction of their homes and the confiscation and destruction of their livestock, crops and food sources. Lord Milner initially created the camps to house refugees and those who had surrendered.⁶⁸ The destruction of homes made it essential to provide shelter for the thousands of homeless women and children and men who had surrendered.⁶⁹ Kitchener (who succeeded Roberts on 29 November 1900) was convinced that more Boer soldiers would surrender if their wives and children were placed in concentration camps, and therefore, perpetuated and extended Roberts' scorched earth policy by introducing the camp system in which mainly women and children were interned (Pretorius, 2001:28).⁷⁰ By January 1901 Roberts's punitive destruction of Boer property in response to their continued resistance was occurring indiscriminately and hundreds of farms in the Free State and Transvaal had been rendered derelict (Brits, 2016:37).⁷¹ After appropriating

⁶⁷ According to The Hague Convention of 1899, the "destruction of property had to be limited to what was "imperatively demanded by the necessities of war"" (Pretorius, 2001:38). Pretorius (2001:39) proposes that the destruction of houses exceeded the limits set by The Hague Convention, and the British commander-in-chief "justified his actions by explaining that the war had, in many regions, degenerated into a guerrilla war. He was therefore, he argued, obliged to suppress it "by those methods which civilized nations have at all time found it obligatory to use under like circumstances"". Although the Hague Convention (24th July 1899) which was signed by 24 countries including Great Britain, "prohibited the destruction or seizure of enemy's property", Britain's justification for the destruction of Boer farms was "that they were used for military purposes or that the women who lived there were spies" (Grundlingh, 2013:38).

⁶⁸ Pretorius (2001:40) states that in October 1902 Milner admitted to the destruction of 30 000 houses during the war.

⁶⁹ According to Nasson (2013:175), although the camps were originally aimed at housing white people (and occasional black employees who accompanied them), they "were soon populated with drifting black refugees, including the dependants of men engaged as labourers, messengers and scouts". By 1902 more than 120 000 black people, mostly women and children, were interned in 80 concentration camps after the establishment of the Native Refugee Department in 1901 (Nasson, 2013:178).

⁷⁰ Grundlingh (2002:18) proposes that the most controversial aspect of the War is "the British removal of Boer women and children from their farms to an incarceration in concentration camps. It was a strategy employed by the British high command in an effort to curtail the activities of Boer guerrilla fighters who lived off the land and used farmsteads as bases". According to Pakenham (1993:248), Kitchener had decided to "clear the country of everything that might sustain the guerrillas – horses, cattle, sheep, women, and children", and as he was bored by administrative duties, "left the details to administrators, who in turn arranged for tents and mattresses, plus roughly one superintendent, one doctor, and a few nurses for each of the twenty-four camps". According to Brits (2016:37), although Roberts's scorched-earth policy was motivated by Boer guerrilla warfare in response to the annexation of the Orange Free State (24th May 1900) and the Transvaal (5th June 1900), "houses had been burnt from as early as March 1900 on Roberts's instructions if they had been used to shelter Boer commandos".

⁷¹ Bradford (2013:51) is of the opinion that looting of property yielded enjoyment for many men of varied ethnic and class backgrounds and "what was being displayed was the relish felt by men in exerting mastery over the female domain". According to Van Heyningen (2013a:57), during the occupation of Dundee some 1500 Boer soldiers "went whooping through the streets, plundering shops and homes". According to Reitz (2006:22), the looting of Dundee by the Boers was done by a minority serving under general Maroola: "[o]fficers tried to stem the rush, but we were not to be denied, and we plundered shops and dwelling-houses, and did considerable damage before the Commandants and Field-Cornets were able to restore some semblance of order. It was not for what we got out of it, for we knew that we could carry little or nothing away with us, but the joy of ransacking other people's property

livestock and provisions, remaining animals were destroyed and crops, houses and outbuildings burnt. The transportation of women and children to the camps were traumatic experiences, as apart from having to witness the destruction of their homes and livelihood, they were often left with no food or shelter for extended periods. Boer women had been living isolated lives on farms where they were responsible for the physical and mental welfare of their children and assisting their husbands in duties. Due to this isolated existence they were very attached to their homes and farms.

Women were only allowed to retrieve a few items of clothing, bedding and food, before their homes were destroyed, after which they had to cover long distances on foot or in open wagons (Pretorius, 2001: 44).⁷² According to Elsabé Brits (2016:66), Emily Hobhouse witnessed countless women and children on route to the Kimberley camp, during one of her train journeys, whose faces “wore grimaces of pain as a result of exposure, hunger and exhaustion”.⁷³ They had no food, shelter or medicine and Hobhouse, who had just returned from there, knew that they would find neither soap nor blankets on their arrival (Brits, 2016:67-68).⁷⁴ The Havenga report, which was only made public in 1982, contains more than fifty sworn statements by Boer women regarding abuse they suffered at the hand of British soldiers (Van der Merwe cited in Bradford, 2013:52). One of these is a sworn statement by Johanna Chatorina Geldenhuys from the Vrede district, in which she recollects the sexual molestation of her 10-year-old daughter by a British soldier, which she had to watch while being restrained, who then continued to rape her in front of her daughter (Van der Merwe, cited in Bradford, 2013:52).

is hard to resist, and we gave way to the impulse”. Reitz was part of a group of 24 men who had remained behind to prevent further looting (Reitz, 2006:22).

⁷² Bradford (2013:47) states that Britain’s colonial conquests in Asia and Africa, and the looting and destruction of crops, homes and livestock, were standard methods of suppressing resistance as a symbol of imperial manhood amongst Victorian soldiers.

⁷³ Emily Hobhouse was a British pacifist and feminist who strived to assist Boer women and children in the concentration camps, and was the founder of the South African Women and Children Distress Fund which collected money to assist Boer families.

⁷⁴ Brits (2016:68) explains that: “[w]hen Emily returned to the Kimberley camp two days later, she heard that seven children had died during the few days she had been away. The rain kept pouring down and it was cold inside the tents, most of which were leaking. The meat the people received was maggots, and those who complained did not get meat again”. While on a train trip to Bloemfontein, Hobhouse encountered 600 women and children “who were forced to sit waiting in open rail trucks with no shelter from the sun, wind or rain. They had been there for two days”, and children were “crying from hunger as they had not eaten anything for three days” (Brits, 2016:68). On Hobhouse’s way to Cape Town ten days later, she encountered the same group of women and children still waiting at Springfontein station in the bitter cold with no shelter or toilet facilities and very little food (Brits, 2016:69). Women and children were sleeping under the rail trucks whilst others had constructed shelters from sail cloth. In one of these shelters Hobhouse encountered a woman who sat with her dying child on her lap (Brits, 2016:69). Hobhouse who witnessed the death of the child responded as follows: “The mother neither moved nor wept. It was her only child. Dry-eyed but deathly white, she sat there motionless looking not at the child but far, far away into depths of grief beyond all tears” (Hobhouse cited in Brits, 2016:69).

Lord Roberts and Kitchener were not prepared for the consequences of their orders to intern thousands of women and children in camps, with disastrous outcomes (Nasson & Grundlingh, 2013:13). Van Heyningen (2001:181) proposes that the inhabitants of the camps suffered from social atomisation, manifesting as apathy and lack of cooperation, which contributed to a general malaise. This is apparently caused by trauma, such as the distressing witnessing of destruction of property and alienation experienced in the camps, which was exacerbated by malnutrition. The security, privacy and intimacy of their domestic lives were disrupted and previous life in spacious houses on large farms was replaced with small tents in close proximity to each other, which contributed to emotional suffering. The tents provided little shelter during the cold winter months and were impossible to keep clean due to dust storms and muddy conditions after rain had fallen. Women were required to cook their own food over open fires and wash their clothes and linen in cold water. Food was rationed, and women had to queue for hours every day to receive their ration of meat, whilst groceries were distributed once a week (Wessels, 2001:68).⁷⁵ The main causes of death in the camps were diseases such as measles, diarrhoea, dysentery, enteric, marasmus (wasting away of the body), whooping cough and convulsions (Van Heyningen, 2001:183).⁷⁶ Another complication of the lack of adequate nutrition was scurvy, which was widespread (Van Heyningen, 2013b:127).⁷⁷

British camp doctors, as supporters of the Imperial cause whose criticism of the camp inmates was grounded in a Victorian middle-class consciousness, reinforced stereotypes such as lack of cleanliness in the lower classes (Van Heyningen, 2001: 183-184).⁷⁸ Boer women were, therefore, regarded as “dirty and insanitary, their tents were untidy and their children were rarely washed”, they tended to “ignore the instructions of the doctors and perished in using their own medicines, from “Dutch medicines’ to more unsavoury medicines” (Van

⁷⁵ Van Heyningen (2016:192) states that meat rations were of a substandard quality and there was an almost complete lack of “fresh fruit or vegetables, except occasionally potatoes, and of fresh milk. Milk was almost always in a dehydrated form, and as the camp authorities felt that the mothers used too much, they dispensed it already diluted, with the result that it was sometimes too thin”.

⁷⁶ Van Heyningen (2013b:126) proposes that measles and measles-related complications to be the main cause of death amongst children between the ages of 1-15, due to overcrowding and malnutrition, and respiratory ailments and typhoid causing most adult deaths.

⁷⁷ According to Van Heyningen (2013b:129), “many children had worms and similar parasites, and their poor diet would have resulted in ubiquitous tooth decay”. There are no references in camp records, as “it was taboo to speak of sexual organs” of “women’s ailments like cystitis”, and references to “puerperal fever are uncommon”

⁷⁸ According to Marks (2016:159), death from disease occurred on both sides and: “during the South African War vastly more men, women, and children died of disease than of enemy fire. This is true even if one excludes the massive loss of life in the concentration camps and restricts one’s gaze to the death toll on the British side: of the 22,000 deaths, two-thirds were from largely preventable disease”.

Heyningen, 2001:184-185).⁷⁹ Boer women preferred to use their own midwives (as they had always done) and “refused to enter the hospitals and concealed their children when they were ill” (Van Heyningen, 2001:185).⁸⁰ Van Heyningen (2016:185-186) states that Boer women felt disempowered as they were traditionally responsible for medical care and nurturing in the home, which contributed to their standing in society, whereas, in the camps, they were expected to send their sick children to hospital. Camp doctors, as agents of the empire, could do very little to prevent deaths especially amongst children, and, therefore, in defence blamed the Boers (Van Heyningen, 2013b:132). British doctors and nurses criticised the mothering skills and hygiene of Boer women. Boer women distrusted British doctors as their children often died when admitted to hospitals, and therefore preferred to rely on their own traditional therapeutic approaches.⁸¹

Many women, in an effort to evade internment, chose the precarious life of roaming the veld with their children in wagons. Of these women the most famous is Nonnie De La Rey, the wife of General Koos (Jacobus Herculaas) De La Rey, who chose the insecurity and hazards of the open veld above internment in a camp. Zelda Rowan (2013:84) argues that the key quality that enabled Nonnie De La Rey to survive in the veld with her adult daughter, six young children and three loyal workers, from December 1900 to May 1902, was her “tenacity, adaptability and strong survival instinct”. Helen Ross (2006:65) proposes that Nonnie De La Rey, as an emotionally stable woman who did not succumb to self-pity, faced challenges head on, and always found solutions when confronted with difficulties. Nonnie De La Rey remarked that she had encountered many *treks*, consisting of fearful women and children, during her wandering across the veld and was surprised at how well they seemed (De la Rey cited in Raath, 2007:109-110). Women often gathered in small laagers consisting of family and friends, sometimes more than 80 wagons, seeking shelter near Boer commandos (Pretorius, 2001:51-52). Ross (2006:24) states that some Boer women even accompanied their husbands on commando, such as Commandant-General Piet Joubert’s wife

⁷⁹ Van Heyningen (2016:186) further proposes that “conflict between the British doctors and the Boer women was not entirely the result of the war but arose partly from a confrontation between different traditions of healing. As a result the British authorities considered the Boer women benighted, superstitious, ignorant, and culpably careless in sanitary matters. To the women, on the other hand, the doctors were inhumane and lacked the skills or the desire to deal with camp mortality”.

⁸⁰ Van Heyningen (2013b:133) argues that British working classes resisted hospitalisation as late as the 1890’s and “continued to be nursed at home, by private nurses if necessary”, and women in particular “felt disempowered in hospitals because they were not permitted to take care of their children”.

⁸¹ Van Heyningen (2012b:13141) proposes that the high mortality rate amongst infants was mainly due to overcrowding, poor accommodation and lack of nutrition.

Hendrina whose habit of “managing” her husband earned her the title of “general in petticoats”.

The war required women to become heads of households, farmers, *trekkers* across the *veld*, and wielders of arms in the absence of their husbands, thus providing them with political privileges, albeit in a skewed form (Bradford, 2002:48).⁸² Women were fierce and loyal supporters of the cause, often sending their men back to the war when they returned downhearted and ready to give up. According to Bradford (2002:51):

[b]y the time the Transvaal generals and Kruger were urging peace on June 1, both Boer women and “Butcher Roberts” had made central contributions to creating bittereinders on whom Free State leaders could rely. Gender politics in homes and gendered warfare on homes were more important than generals with machismo for continuation of the war.

The draconian reprisals by the British resulted in Boer guerrilla warfare that brought them closer together as a people with a common cause (Bradford, 2013: 70).

[a]nd it revived men’s identification with a nationalist cause. Many now found new ways of being men. As for Boer women, they did not submit, neither in 1900 nor in 1902 when burghers abandoned the war. The 1899 to 1902 war was the single most important episode in creating not only Afrikaner nationalism, but also an Afrikaner nationalism shifting its core to the more irreconcilable sex (Bradford, 2013:70).

After the signing of the Peace of Vereeniging on 31 May 1902, the Boers were an impoverished people. All their sacrifice had been in vain, their farms had been destroyed, and their families were fragmented. Some women had to wait for their husbands to return from exile as the men who had refused to sign the treaty were forced to leave their country.⁸³ According to Van Heyningen (2013a:298):

⁸² According to Giliomee (2003:256), Boer women “scorned men who gave up the fight”, and they were not intimidated by the destruction of their houses and preferred “their houses to burn down than to see their husbands surrender”.

⁸³ Deneys Reitz’s two older brothers were captured during the war, whilst Deneys, his father and younger brother served until the signing of the peace treaty (Reitz, 2006:189). His father initially served as Secretary of State for the Transvaal Republic but joined the war when “things went badly for the Boer”, and with Deneys and his younger brother, refused to accept the terms of the peace treaty of Vereeniging (Reitz, 2006:189). As a result, their home was occupied by the British and they “were placed on board a railway train and escorted to Ressano Garcia, the first Portuguese village across the Eastern Transvaal border” (Reitz, 2006:189).

With peace also came a return to the patriarchal order, under which women could no longer expect a reluctantly conceded independent existence. The British classed them firmly as dependants, unable to help themselves. Women were not allowed to go out to the farms on their own, though, as long as there was a man in the party, even the extended family could be included.

Van Heyningen (2013a:309-310) argues that the physical health of many people was irreversibly damaged due to medical complications caused by measles, which “may well have contributed to the poor health of many Afrikaners that C. Louis Leipoldt observed in the 1920s”. Sandra Swart (2013:197) proposes that the defeated Boers resorted to ‘survivalist humour’, a subversive dark humour that “allowed the preservation of some dignity and the weathering of changes in a profoundly damaged society”. The trauma experienced during the war also caused psychological damage that had a long lasting effect on the psyche of the Afrikaner nation.⁸⁴

Van Heyningen (2013a:315) notes that many Boer men and women chose to remain silent about the trauma experienced as “theirs is a culture in which emotions were not openly displayed”. Whereas Paul Connerton (2008:59) proposes that there are various motivations for ‘forgetting’ traumatic experiences, one of these being a ‘prescriptive’ forgetting where the memory of past transgressions might cause division and recrimination (Connerton, 2008:62).⁸⁵ Another motive for ‘forgetting’ is the notion of ‘humiliated silence’, which often manifests covertly as a “collusive silence brought on by a particular kind of collective shame”, which consists of a desire to ‘forget’ and an ‘actual forgetting’ (Connerton, 2008:67). When people do not want to talk about traumatic experiences it is due to a type of repression, which at the same time is a form of survival, and remaining silent or “the desire to forget may be an essential ingredient in that process of survival” (Connerton, 2008:68). According to Petronella Maritz, my mother, the daughter of Cornelis and Maria Maritz, her father never spoke about his war experiences, although he sang his *kommando lied* (commando song) to his children on occasion.

⁸⁴ During a conference held at the University of Cape Town after the 1994 elections in South Africa, Erica Apfelbaum commented on the need for survivors of trauma to tell their stories to a wider audience in order to prevent internalisation and dissociation (Van Heyningen, 2013a:314).

⁸⁵ The formulation of peace terms often contain the wish “that past actions should not just be forgiven but forgotten” (Connerton, 2008:62).

Lou-Marie Kruger (2008:118) states that some Boer women, such as Johanna Brandt (1905) who wrote the following in her report on the Irene concentration camp, were active in the documentation of memories:

...en deze dingen moeten bewaard worden met al het ander, zoowel goed als kwaad, dat medegewerkt heft om den Afrikaanschen stam tot een volk te maken. O, vrouwen van Zuid-Afrika, schrijft op alles wat gij geleden hebt onder de handen van onze machtige verdrukkers. Niets mag verloren gaan, niets mag vergeten worden.

All of this should be preserved, good and evil that contributed towards making a nation of the African tribe. Oh, women of South Africa, record everything you have suffered at the hands of our mighty oppressors, so that nothing will be forgotten.⁸⁶

Kruger (2008:122) states that there was a drive of remembrance by women just after the war, which comprised a pious passivity combined with reckless activism, as part of women's goal to construct their identity as *Boervroue* (Boer women). The reasons for 'remembering' or 'forgetting' traumatic experiences are complex, and generally occur within specific cultural and social contexts that are regulated by external power impacting on the individual as part of a collective.

When Boer women were required to assume the duties of their husbands at war, they briefly enjoyed a novel form of power. As ardent supporters of the cause, they insisted on their husbands' and sons' participation in the war, thereby accessing a political platform from within the home. They maintained a strong defiance of British authority, reminiscent of *trekker* women's resistance lead by Susanna Smit, and were opposed to the signing of the peace treaty in 1902. Although some women delivered testimonies about their experiences in the camps, the majority remained silent. This stoic acceptance of suffering and sacrifice inspired Afrikaner cultural entrepreneurs to construct an iconic *volksmoeder* identity for a nationalist agenda.

3.4. A brief overview of the post war Afrikaner (1910-1961)

⁸⁶ My translation.

The Afrikaner people were an impoverished and divided minority after the Anglo-Boer War, consisting of those who had sacrificed all, those who either remained impartial or pledged allegiance to Britain, and those who had surrendered.⁸⁷ According to Dan O'Meara (1977:158), Afrikaner nationalism was not a monolithic or undifferentiated cultural phenomenon but a "historically specific, often surprisingly flexible, reaction of particular class forces to the pressures of capitalist development".⁸⁸ The South African Party (SAP) led by Louis Botha and Jan Smuts was established in 1910 as part of the South African Union.⁸⁹ An embittered minority was opposed to backing Prime Minister Louis Botha (The South African Party) in his support of the British campaign during the First World War (1914-18). This led to an unsuccessful 1914 Rebellion under the leadership of Generals De la Rey, De Wet and Beyers.⁹⁰ General Beyers drowned in the Vaal River during an attempted escape, General De la Rey was killed by a stray bullet during a road block and the rebel Jopie Fourie was court-martialled and executed.

According to Swart (1998:737), many of the 11 000 Afrikaners who joined the 1914 rebellion against the Union government were farmers and *bywoners* who felt alienated "by the state's failure to alleviate the economic recession" and "increasingly anxious over issues of class and race".⁹¹ Swart (1998:737) maintains that the men who joined the rebellion identified with the Republican commando system "which functioned as a practical and symbolic mode of masculinity".⁹² The Defence Act, which formed part of a modernising state, together with

⁸⁷ According to Giliomee (2003:324), after the war most impoverished Afrikaner men in Johannesburg "worked as cab or trolley drivers; some became brick makers, others offloaded the wagons that delivered farm produce. Girls found work at hand-laundries and boys as messengers or newspaper sellers. Prostitution and crime were common alternative ways of earning a living".

⁸⁸ O'Meara (1977:159) states that the Afrikaner of the Western Cape, in comparison to those in the northern part of the country, was economically well off and educated. "In the Cape, the cultural nationalism of the language movement was given political and economic muscle. In three full years a handful of Cape Town and Stellenbosch professional men formed Die Nasionale Pers (National Press), the Cape Nationalist Party, and Santam and Sanlam" (O'Meara, 1997: 159).

⁸⁹ After the split of the SAP in 1913, Botha and Smuts led the South African Party, Hertzog formed the National Party (NP), and the Unionist Party was led by Thomas Smartt followed by Colonel Creswell's Labour Party, consisting mainly of English speakers. According to Swart (1998:744) "Complete egalitarianism in Boer society was a myth propagated by later nationalist discourse, and *Volksseenheid* or 'national unity' was a teleological imposition, born out of the need for political unity at specific times".

⁹⁰ The Labour Party and the Unionists supported Botha but Herzog's National Party voted against support of Britain.

⁹¹ *Bywoners* were poor white Afrikaners who did not own any land and were employed by wealthier farmers. According to Swart (1997:741), "The capitalisation and commercialisation of farming affected more than the livelihood of the *bywoner* – his sense of identity was challenged".

⁹² According to Swart (1998:742), "The rebel male was faced with the loss of his identity, through the undermining of his status as the patriarch. This had resulted in his removal from the land, being forced to become an urban labourer or becoming a marginalised and scorned *bywoner*".

Industrialisation, caused further estrangement.⁹³ The traditional patriarchal family system of the Boer farming community was under threat, as wealthier Afrikaner farmers replaced the poor white *bywoners* with Black labour, and many impoverished Afrikaners abandoned the *platteland* in search of work. Other factors that contributed to urbanisation were the severe drought of 1932-1933, the Great Depression of 1929-1933, and farming becoming unsustainable due to the subdivision of farms on the death of the owner. Petronella Maritz, my mother, whose parents were farmers, was born in 1929 during this period and due to her parent's compromised economic standing they were unable to subsidise her studies. The lack of access to further studies, either via a bursary or loan, had a profound influence on Petronella's economic and social standing after the divorce from her husband.

The *Broederbond* (League of Brothers), founded in 1918, strove to uplift the Afrikaner and set out to assist Afrikaners with urbanisation.⁹⁴ According to Du Preez (in Wilkins & Strydom, 2012: xvii), the *Broederbond* infiltrated church synods, theological seminaries, Christian National Education as well as universities, where the chancellors and vice-chancellors of Afrikaans universities (as well as the University of Port Elizabeth) were mostly senior *broeders*. Du Preez (in Wilkins & Strydom, 2012: xvi) argues that the *Broederbond* framed church dogma and ideology "to promote the ideas of Afrikaners as a 'chosen people' and of racial segregation as God's will: these were fundamental tenets of Afrikaner Christian Nationalism".

Johan Kinghorn (1994:400-4001) comments on "the inward function of religion" and proposes that the existential motivation for mythical creation stories by the Afrikaner was rooted in their fear of losing their identity as a *volk*. In order to assure the continuation of their ethnic identity as a minority, the Afrikaner concentrated on maintaining a lineage based

⁹³ The Defence Act of 1912 "imposed modern training methods, uniforms, ranking systems, disciplinary codes and promotional norms" (Swart, 1998:737). One of the grievances of the Afrikaner male was the khaki colour, and its association with the war, of the uniform.

⁹⁴ In Ivor Wilkins and Hans Strydom's (2012: xiii) voluminous study of the *Broederbond*, Max Du Preez describes the *Broederbond* as a "secret, elitist and patriarchal clique". According to Wilkins and Strydom (2012:xiv), the *Broederbond* "started, or helped start, social and economic upliftment schemes like the Reddingsdaadbond and the Helpmekaarfonds, banks, media empires, industries and financial institutions like Volkskas, Federale Volksbeleggings, Federale Mynbou and Dagbreek Pers. It had a direct hand in establishing the Rand Afrikaanse University (now the University of Johannesburg), the Goudstad Teachers' Training College and the University of Port Elizabeth". By the 1970s Afrikaners owned companies such as "Sanlam, Saambou, General Mining, Rembrandt and Nasionale Pers- all dominated by Broeders. The civil service was run and staffed mostly by Afrikaners and the South African Railways was used to provide employment to unskilled and uneducated Afrikaners" (Wilkins & Strydom, 2012: xiv). According to Wilkins and Strydom (2012: 78-79), members of the Broederbond who were Nazi sympathisers had infiltrated every government department, and "a large number of Dutch Reformed ministers as well as teachers were active in the Broederbond". Smuts opposed the Broederbond describing them as a "dangerous, cunning, political, Fascist organisation of which no civil servant, if he was to retain his loyalty to the State and the administration, could be allowed to be a member" (Smuts cited in Wilkins & Strydom, 2012: 83).

on racial discrimination, which resulted in the policy of apartheid. Although historians differ on the importance of a Calvinistic influence, it is generally accepted that twentieth century nationalists relied on mythical interpretations of historical eras, such as the Great Trek and the Anglo-Boer War, in order to build a nationalist identity. According to Berger (1967:32), the use of religion to legitimise the socially constructed world rests on religion's "ultimately valid ontological status" in societies, which "*locates* them within a sacred and cosmic frame of reference" and helps them to maintain social roles. Berger (1967:34) regards the relationship between the sociological and divine orders to be inseparable, each serving as a mirror of the other, as everything "'here below' has its analogue 'up above'". By participating in the institutional order men, *ipso facto*, participate in the divine cosmos".

De Klerk (1975:193) argues that "it was the Second World War which finally shattered this traditional society". Many Afrikaners joined Smut's new South African Army to fight on the side of Britain in spite of vigorous opposition from Malan's new National Party and the *Ossewabrandwag* (Ox Wagon Sentinel), a para-military organisation.⁹⁵ De Klerk (1975:194-195) states that "Winston Churchill sought Smutsian approval on all major questions". Always at Jan Smuts' side was his wife (the archetypal Boer woman):

Ouma – Granny, the Boer woman of Doornkloof. Like her husband, she received the outside world at the sprawling corrugated iron-and-wood homestead, which had once been a Boer War officers' mess. She wore flat heeled shoes, workday dresses, but never a hat, and moved about the war scene, from South to North Africa. Like Mother Courage in a new key (De Klerk, 1975:194-195).

By 1948 the white and non-white issue dominated the political stage with the white minority, who had established a new fatherland, wanting to safeguard their future by means of racial segregation (Van Jaarsveld, 1975:253-254). After the 1948 general election, when the National Party came to power through a white-only electorate, they concentrated on establishing a Republic that brought about the restoration of Afrikaner unity (Van Jaarsveld, 1975:257). Hendrik Verwoerd was mainly responsible for realising the Republican dream, and on 31 May 1961 South Africa became a Republic (De Klerk, 1975:270). I was born shortly before South Africa became a Republic followed by the political monopoly of the

⁹⁵ The *Ossewabrandwag* (1940-1954), a radical para-military organisation with strong republican sentiments, opposed South Africa's allegiance with the Allies and participation in the Second World War. The more radical *Stormjaers* (Storm Troopers) were responsible for acts of sabotage in South Africa.

National Party. The National Party ruled until 1994 when the ANC won the election with an overwhelming majority, ending decades of apartheid and centuries of white rule.

This chapter on Afrikaner history provides the broad historical context from which my three female ancestors emerged. In the following chapter I provide an overview of the construction of *volksmoeder* ideology and its role in the resurrection of the Afrikaner nation, in order to bring into focus the role mapped for women in the broader Afrikaner Imaginary and Symbolic.

Chapter 4

4. The *volksmoeder*

This exploration of *volksmoeder* ideology is undertaken to highlight the complex nature of female agency and to facilitate my re-storying of the lives of three Afrikaner women. As an exemplar of *volksmoeder* ideology I explore the motivations for and significance of the National Women's Monument (1913), followed by an overview of Willem Postma (1918) and Eric Stockenström's (1921) early twentieth century cultural constructions, grounded in The Great Trek and Anglo-Boer War, which cemented the foundations for *volksmoeder* ideology. This is followed by an investigation of a selection of revisionist historical interpretations of the *volksmoeder* trope. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to provide an exhaustive account of the complexities of *volksmoeder* ideology.⁹⁶

As mentioned in the last chapter, Afrikaner women had endured significant hardship and trauma during both the Great Trek and especially the Anglo-Boer War that caused the death of approximately 26 000 Boer women and children. They formed part of a defeated and impoverished people who had lost their hard fought freedom and livelihood, as well as their traditional way of living. Many rural Afrikaners, driven by poverty, became urbanised in order to survive. A group of Afrikaner men (swearing a solemn oath of secrecy) established the *Broederbond* (1918), and actively strove to build a racially segregated Afrikaner nation. As will become clear in the discussion to follow, the Afrikaner patriarchy needed the *volksmoeder* to bolster their nationalist agenda of building a racially 'pure' and 'chosen' Afrikaner *volk*. According to Max du Preez (in Wilkins & Strydom, 2012: xxxi), the *Broederbond* with its initial "noble ideas of service to the Afrikaner", subsequently, "deteriorated into a powerful group of ethnic chauvinists".

⁹⁶ For a detailed and comprehensive analysis of *volksmoeder* ideology, refer to Van Rensburg (2012); Kruger (1991); McClintock (1991), (1995); Vincent (1999), (2000), (2009); Stanley & Dampier (2007); du Toit (2002), (2003); Walker (1990), (1995), Cloete (1992), (1999); Van Der Merwe (2011), Van Der Watt (1998); Coetzee (1983); J Grobler (2002); Van Heyningen (2001), (2013a), (2013b); Swart (1998), (2008); Brink (2013), (2015); Blignaut (2008), (2013).

4.1. The National Women's Monument (1913)

I launch this discussion of the symbolic significance of the *volksmoeder* with a discussion of the National Women's Monument, as the polemics surrounding this monument indicate the contentiousness and instability of signification regarding women in Afrikaner historiography. The National Women's Monument, the first ever war monument in honour of women and children, was erected as a tribute to sacrifices made by Boer women and children in the concentration camps, as well as to those who survived in the veld during the war (Van Zyl, 2013:213). The idea, which originated with President Steyn, and enthusiastically supported by his wife Tibbie (Rachel Isabella) Steyn, was discussed at a meeting on 31 May 1902 with his brother Jan Steyn, General Hertzog, Abraham Fischer, and Revd. Murray (Van Zyl, 2013:213).⁹⁷

Since the Afrikaner people were impoverished by the war, financing of the memorial was realised by a fund-raising effort that lasted four years.⁹⁸ The monument was constructed from sandstone. Anton Van Wouw designed and created (with advice from Emily Hobhouse) the sculptures and panels in the studio of Antonio Canova in Rome (Van Zyl, 2013:216).⁹⁹ The monument consists of an obelisk surrounded by a circular wall and includes sculptured side panels, as well as the main sculpture of a seated Boer woman holding her dead child on her lap, with another woman, wearing a traditional bonnet (*kappie*), standing behind them.

According to Grundlingh (2013:231), Boer women, as members of a patriarchal society, were reliant on their husbands for protection from war atrocities. Boer men, therefore, experienced tremendous guilt for being unable to protect their wives and children while at war. In acknowledgement of this indebtedness President Steyn felt the need to honour the sacrifices of women and children (Grundlingh, 2013:231). The monument was unveiled on 16 December 1913 by Tibbie Steyn who at the last minute took the place of Hobhouse who had fallen ill. Twenty thousand people attended the unveiling ceremony and Grundlingh (2013:237)

⁹⁷ During a national conference in Bloemfontein on 7 February 1907, attended by "the Dutch churches and Afrikaner political organisations, including General Louis Botha's Het Volk (Transvaal), General Hertzog's Orangia-Unie (Free State), Jan Hofmeyr's Afrikanerbond (Cape Colony) and Het Kongres of Natal", the idea of a memorial consisting of an obelisk or sculpture was conceptualised (Van Zyl, 2013: 213-214).

⁹⁸ President Steyn declared that the monument was made possible "not only by the wealth of the wealthy, but especially by the poverty of the poor" (Van Zyl, 2013:214).

⁹⁹ The design, submitted by the sculptor Anton Van Wouw and architect Frans Soff, was slightly modified by members of the steering committee who after some deliberation decided on Bloemfontein as the location of choice (Van Zyl, 2013:215).

maintains that the ceremony was conducted in a dignified and spiritual manner without any political overtones. According to Hobhouse, the motivation for her involvement in the project was driven by three factors: firstly, a “sense of justice towards the innocent victims of a great injustice”; secondly an “overwhelming pity for suffering childhood, which could not understand but must suffer”; and thirdly in “determination to uphold those higher standards of human feeling and action which England holds in sane and sober moments” (Hobhouse cited in Brits, 2016:201).¹⁰⁰

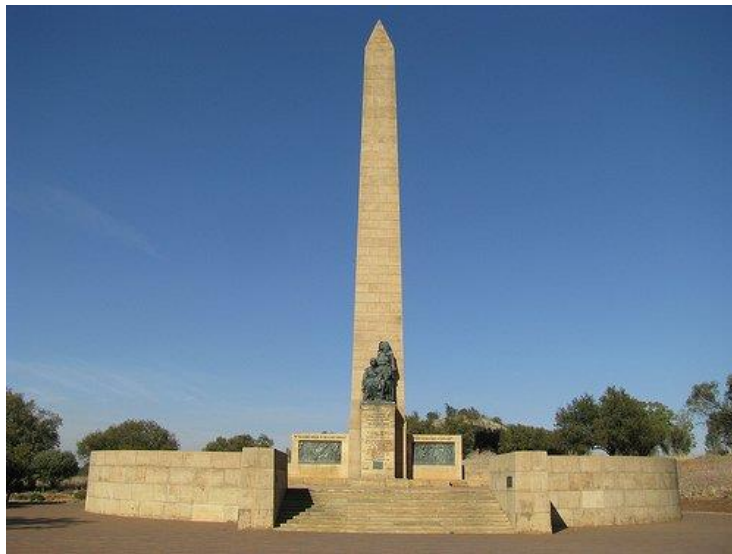


Figure 4. National Women's Monument. Photo: L. Koolhoven (no date).¹⁰¹

Van Heyningen (2013a:318) argues that South Africans disagree on the significance of the monument with some Afrikaner women regarding it as a symbol of patriarchal nationalism. Elsie Cloete (1992:50) criticises the monument as being a “symbol of unmitigated male success”, and the 35-meter obelisk, which forms an integral (and central) part of the monument, as a “phallic symbol” that “becomes the transcendental signifier of a phallocentric *volks*-metaphysic”. According to Landman (1994:4), while several men are interred there, no woman has been buried within the enclave of the monument, apart from Hobhouse and Tibbie Steyn, who “received the dubious honour of being buried on top of her husband”. Elsabé Brink (2008:9) states that Van Wouw’s sculptures immortalise Afrikaner

¹⁰⁰ Emily Hobhouse was sceptical of Van Wouw’s artistic talent and visited the studio in Rome to provide guidance. In response, Van Wouw remodelled the initial clay sculptures, but Hobhouse remained dissatisfied as evident in a letter to Isie Smuts (married to General Jan Smuts): “Oh! Why oh why did they not put the thing into the hands of Rodin & some really great sculptor?” (Hobhouse cited in Brits, 2016:201).

¹⁰¹ Koolhoven, L. (no date). *The national Women’s Monument* (webpage). Available: <http://www.mieliestronk.com/vrouemon.html>

women in their roles as *volksmoeders* who accept their suffering uncomplainingly. Brink (2008:9) criticises Van Wouw's portrayal of women as representative of heroines who bring offerings to the altar of the nation. She suggests that the significance of women as victims of war are not restored by it (2008:9). McClintock (1995:178), states that the monument "took the form of a circular domestic enclosure, where women stand weeping with their children", purging "women's martial role as fighters and farmers" replacing it with "the figure of the lamenting mother with babe in arms".

Albert Grundlingh (2013:229), however, argues that Boer women and children deserve public recognition for their experiences during the Anglo-Boer War.¹⁰² Grundlingh (2013:230) is critical of suggestions that the monument "reflects women's subservience to men", or that the focus on women's suffering is a masculine subordination of women. According to Grundlingh (2013:231), Tibbie Steyn viewed "the project as an attempt to place women 'on a high pedestal', while Hobhouse made it very clear that it was essentially a women's monument of which 'all the world's women should be proud'". The Afrikaner of 1913 was not a politically homogenous group. This discounts the idea that the monument was a nationalist project (Grundlingh, 2013:232).¹⁰³ The ethnic mobilisation of the monument for a nationalist agenda, which affected the symbolic meaning originally intended, only became strident in the 1930s and 1940s (Grundlingh, 2013:238).¹⁰⁴

Grundlingh (2013:240) argues that the shift in the initial significance of the monument "points to the instability and vulnerability of collective memory, as well as silences, denials and sublimations that come from trauma". It is significant that the unveiling of the monument took place on the auspicious day of December 16, then known as *Dingaansdag* (Dingaan's day), which commemorates the Battle of Blood River in which 470 *Voortrekkers* defeated the mighty Zulu army in 1838. The Afrikaner's identification with the Women's Monument is one of suffering, humiliation and defeat, whereas *Dingaansdag* memorialises a victory seemingly granted by God. This signifies an attempt to infuse defeat and loss with a more positive, heroic association. Acts of remembrance by survivors closely linked to traumatic events are often ritually intoned with the words 'lest we forget', but survivors would

¹⁰² According to Van Zyl (2013:213), the creation of The Women's Monument was the "first major post-war undertaking by the Boers, and served as a symbol "not only of a nation's profound pain, but also of its resurrection".

¹⁰³ General Botha initially opposed the idea of a monument in commemoration of the concentration camp atrocities as he was concerned about the negative impact of the monument on post war reconciliation.

¹⁰⁴ References to the suffering of Black people in the camps were omitted when Hobhouse's speech was read at the unveiling (Grundlingh, 2013:242).

frequently rather ‘forget’ and leave ‘remembering’ to later generations (Connerton, 2008:89). The Women’s Monument currently includes a commemoration of Boer soldiers, shifting the focus of the monument from women and children to the war in general. In 2010, after the 1994 democratic elections in South Africa, a modest memorial that indicates the number of white and black deaths in the camps was erected on the site (Grundlingh, 2013:240).

It is evident that the monument was conceptualised and realised in recognition of the unprecedented suffering in what was essentially a war against women and children. Prior to their internment in the camps, Boer women effectively managed farms in the absence of their husbands. Many women evaded internment by courageously existing in the veld with their children during the war and those in the camps remained defiant in their support of the cause. Boer women had also displayed tremendous courage, endurance and resolve during the Great Trek. The trope of the self-sacrificing ‘lamenting’ *volksmoeder* only emerged during the early 1920’s, due to strategic manipulation of female identity by male cultural entrepreneurs, as will become evident in the following discussion.

4.2. An overview of the identity of Boer/Afrikaner woman according to Postma (1918) and Stockenström (1921)

In support of this re-storying, I provide an overview of ideological interpretations of the archetypal Boer/Afrikaner woman by two early twentieth century cultural entrepreneurs, Willem Postma and Eric Stockenström, who actively contributed to the construction of a mythical *volksmoeder* identity. Willem Postma (1874-1920) was a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church and a champion of Christian National Education which endeavoured to have Afrikaans recognised as a formal language. He published many articles under the pseudonym ‘Dr O’Kulis’, as well as the book *Die boervrouw, moeder van haar volk* (The Boer woman, mother of the nation), in which he conceived nine archetypal traits of an authentic Boer woman (*ware boervrouw*). Her first character trait, according to Postma (1918:63), is her inherent religious nature (*godsdienssin*) which is essential requirement in shaping the integrity of an authentic Boer woman. Postma states that the Boer people are simple and childlike Puritans who live life according to the Word of God, the Boer woman being even more childlike and practical in her acceptance of her faith (1918:63-66).

Her second character trait is her bravery (*dapperheid*) which originated from the difficult conditions in which her ancestors lived (Postma, 1918:67). Here Postma relies on the lives of *Voortrekker* women who stood by their men. The Boer woman's contribution is rated second only to the greatness of God (Postma, 2018:79). She is, thirdly, known for her strong sense of freedom (*vrijheidsin*) which serves as inspiration to the men of the nation (Postma, 1918: 84). Here Postma (1918:86) uses Susanna Smit (who he refers to as the wife of Reverend Erasmus Smit and the sister of Maritz) based on her legendary interaction with Commissioner Cloete as an example of a Boer woman who refused to kneel down to British oppression.

Fourthly, a Boer woman is known for her “*offervaardigheid*” – her generosity and willingness to sacrifice herself for her children, and particularly the *volk* for which she will sacrifice all, even her life if needed (Postma, 2018:90-92, 93). According to Postma (2018:93), as mother of the nation, a Boer woman regards the welfare of the nation as the highest and holiest ideal to strive for. The fifth characteristic, her self-reliance (*selfstandigheid*), is proven beyond doubt by her skill and ingenuity which enables her to make and provide almost anything for her home (Postma, 1918:97-98). The Boer woman has no interest in politics or suffrage and leaves that up to her husband; as mother of the nation she only steps to the fore when her *volk* needs her (Postma, 1918:101).

In sixth place is domesticity (*huismoederlikheid*), evident in her commitment to raising her children in accordance with the scriptures, and her neat well-kept home which she only leaves to attend church or buy provisions for her family (Postma, 1918:97-99). Her inherent ability and the challenging conditions in which she lives contributes to her seventh characteristic, which is a natural talent for the arts in spite of having been deprived of formal training (Postma, 2013:103-105). Her eighth characteristic is her chastity (*eerbaarheid*), which is the reason for the Afrikaners' moral high ground, as she knows how to raise her daughters in a proper and moral way (Postma, 1918:106). Lastly is the fact that she is an inspiration (*besieling*) to family and nation and a patient, loveable friend to her husband to whom she always submits (Postma, 1928:110).

In his publication Stockenström¹⁰⁵ relies on certain characteristics of early Boer women based on their experiences as *trekboers* and *Voortrekkers*, their contribution in the Anglo-Boer War,

¹⁰⁵ Eric Stockenström published *Die vrou in die geskiedenis van die Hollands-Afrikaanse volk: 'n beknopte oorsig van die rol wat die vrou in die geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika gespeel het in die 350 jaar tussen 1568 en 1916*, in 1921 (Woman in the history of the Dutch-Afrikaans nation: A condensed overview of woman's role in the history of South Africa 1568 to 1916).

as well as their involvement in the ACVV.¹⁰⁶ According to Stockenström (1921:43-71), Boer men would not have succeeded during the *treks* into the unknown wilderness if it had not been for their practical, hardy, useful and exemplary spouses who shaped the character of their children and taught them to fear God. Boer women prepared food for their families during the Great Trek and assisted their husbands in battles against the enemy (Stockenström, 1921:233). Boer women were fiercely patriotic, and even though frequently illiterate, their moral calibre and strong belief in God made them fearless, and served as inspiration and guidance to their husbands (Stockenström, 1921:81-84). According to Stockenström (1921:233), the mothers of the future nation regarded the notion of the Afrikaner as a nation of slaves to be repulsive, and they were more determined than their husbands to be free of their British lords and masters. Their inborn love of freedom and patriotism was strengthened and sustained by their belief in God (Stockenström, 1921:235). Similar to Postma, Stockenström (1921:99) also refers to Susanna Smit as an example of a fiercely patriotic Boer woman who was willing to sacrifice everything for freedom.

Stockenström (1921:205) refers to *Tant* (Aunt) Nelie De Wet, the wife of General Christiaan De Wet, as an outstanding example of a sincere, humble, simple, hospitable, esteemed and honourable Boer woman. Two other ‘mothers’ who were outstanding Boer women during the Anglo-Boer War are ‘Mrs De La Rey’ and ‘Mrs Joubert’, wives of two of the most famous Boer Generals (Stockenström, 1921: 216). According to Stockenström (1921: 220), their cruel suffering at the hand of the enemy and the death of their children in the camps were of less importance to ordinary Boer women than the independence of their country. Boer women, as mothers of children and the *volk* and in their capacity as members of the ACCV, were principally responsible for the endurance of the *Hollandse taal* (Dutch language), as well as the ‘fore fatherly’ religious and moral character of the Afrikaner *volk* (Stockenström, 1921:280).

In both of the above accounts the main characteristics ascribed to Boer women are religious devotion, patriotism, sacrifice, domesticity, nurturance, morality, diligence, naiveté and subservience, devotion to their families and above all devotion to the *volk*, as proposed by Postma (1918:157-1580), “*sij weet dat sij in haar skoot dra die toekoms van haar volk en*

¹⁰⁶ The ACCV (*Afrikaanse Christelike Vrouevereniging*) (Afrikaans Christian Women’s Organisation), is the oldest South African woman’s organisation, and was founded 19 October 1904 by a friend of Emily Hobhouse, an English speaking woman named Georgina Solomon.

haar kerk” (she is aware of her duty and bears the future of the nation and the church in her lap).

This fabricated iconic identity ascribed to Boer women by Postma and Stockenström rendered them as sacrificing and subservient mothers confined to the domestic realm. Their courage, endurance and resolute insistence on independence evident in early frontier existence, the Great Trek and Anglo-Boer War, were manipulated according to a patriarchal script that recast them as vessels in service to cultural reproduction. Early Boer and *Voortrekker* women, who had stood their ground alongside their husbands in their resolve to achieve independence from British rule, were reimagined as subservient helpmeets. *Voortrekker* women, similar to American frontier women, were determined and courageous pioneers who stood their ground in hostile and perilous environments.¹⁰⁷

4.3. An overview of *volksmoeder* ideology

When theory posits a collective subject, some people’s subjectivity will be more collective than others’, and when theory construes society as one and whole, some people are always going to be more “social” than those whose voices, if heard, would damage the unity of the model...When theory presents society as a single coherent whole, the ideas of those in power appear as those of the big concept maker (the collective consciousness, mind, species being, or whatever his name is) and therefore of all who are true members of society. In that case, those true members will very likely all turn out to be men (Jay, 1992: 145).

In this overview I demonstrate how *volksmoeder* ideology, with its roots in the Great Trek and the Anglo-Boer War (evident in Postma and Stockenström’s writings) was developed to suit nationalist aspirations of racially segregated *volks*-building. As will become evident in

¹⁰⁷ Joan Smith (2010:174-175), based on information obtained from Indian Pioneer Papers spanning 1861-1936, claims that American frontier women of Oklahoma, apart from taking care of domestic duties, stood their ground and managed homesteads alongside their husbands. Smith (2010:184) challenges stereotypical interpretations of American frontier women as ‘frightened’ and ‘lonely’, and suggests that they were capable, independent homesteaders who “shared the responsibility of running the farms or ranches and protecting their property when threatened by weather, wild animals, or human intruders”. Unlike Boer women who did not enjoy property rights, American frontier women were allowed to take part in ‘land runs’ and stake their own claims to land, enabling them to become successful property owners and farmers in their own right, with many single or widowed women running their own farms (Smith, 2010:180).

the following discussion, *volksmoeder* ideology affected women of all social classes, from working class women and homemakers to members of political and welfare organisations. Within this ethos a woman's role was strictly supportive of masculinist discourse and linked to her husband's economic and social standing in a patriarchal culture and society. Several contemporary historiographers focus on Afrikaner women's complicity in a nationalist agenda and highlight their seemingly enthusiastic participation as active agents in their roles as *volksmoeders*, whilst others focus on their subjugation within a masculinist Symbolic. I explore both perspectives in this overview.

As mentioned some historiographers are adamant that Afrikaner women were ardent partakers in their roles as *volksmoeders*. Charl Blignaut (2013:616) proposes that Afrikaner women were "active constructors of identity and energetic agents of Afrikaner nationalism who manoeuvred themselves within the gender constraints of the day". He concentrates on Afrikaner women's participation in the insalubrious para-military organisation, the *Ossewabrandwag* (OB). Blignaut (2012:70) argues that it is specifically through OB-women's resistance to the war, and their passion for freedom, that their normative *volksmoeder* characteristics are revealed. He argues that Afrikaner women were not 'man-made' women shaped by masculine discourse, as they actively performed the *volksmoeder* role to access agency and construct their identity (Blignaut, 2012: 98,101). He states that "Afrikaner womanhood shows that women construed the *volksmoeder* as a potent tool for maternalist power", and that "women manoeuvred themselves *within this representation* and actively fought for a more expanded version of this ideal" [Author's emphasis] (2012:47, 50). Women extended their role in the private sphere of the home and hearth to include the public sphere (Blignaut, 2015:52).¹⁰⁸

Elsa Nel, an Afrikaner girl in her matric year at *die Afrikaanse Hoër Meisieskool Pretoria* (the Afrikaans Girls High School Pretoria), became a 'heroine' of the *Ossewabrandwag* struggle after her arrest for serving as a courier for the organisation. Nel was summonsed to appear in court on 13 December 1940 where she refused to answer questions, after which she was detained in the Pretoria Central police cells. Two hundred OB-women in *Voortrekker* dress offered Nel their support through song and prayer during her court appearance (Blignaut, 2012:79). According to Blignaut (2012:79), this illustrates the fact that women

¹⁰⁸ Blignaut (2012:73) argues that the 22 June 1940 march from Church Square to the Union Buildings in Pretoria (organised within only five days through the effort of OB-women), consisting of 9 870 women in traditional Voortrekker clothing, demonstrates their identification with 'the Susanna Smit story'. The women protested against South Africa's participation in support of Britain in the Second World War.

used their traditional dress, with reference to the legendary Susanna Smit incident, as a form of resistance.¹⁰⁹ Nel was released on the auspicious date of 16 December (symbolising *Voortrekker* victory over their enemies) which enabled the *Ossewabrandwag* to portray Nel as the archetypal sacrificial and patriotic Boer woman (Blignaut, 2012: 81).¹¹⁰

On the other hand Sandra Swart (2008) concentrates on Afrikaner women's participation in the 1914 Rebellion to provide evidence of their complicity in *volksmoeder* ideology. Swart (2008:45) proposes that many Afrikaner women progressed from 'republican motherhood', based on their role in the Anglo-Boer War, to early twentieth century domesticity as part of their ideological socio-political roles as mothers of the nation. According to Swart (2008:47), suffrage or feminism did not form part of Afrikaner women's 'intellectual environment' and that they only stepped to the fore during a national crisis when their *volk* needed them. She proposes that women adopted one of three different roles; firstly 'cheerleaders' who encouraged the men to war or admonished those who were reluctant; secondly, an auxiliary role of providing food and acting as messengers; and lastly through participation in the 1915 post-Rebellion Women's demonstration (2008:46).

Lou-Marie Kruger (1991) concludes, based on her in depth investigation of *Die Boerevrou* (The Boer Woman) texts, that, although male nationalists actively endeavoured to construct a mythical *volksmoeder* identity, nonetheless, women were active and articulate participants in *volksmoeder* discourse.¹¹¹ *Die Boerevrou* magazine, popular amongst the more uneducated, actively endorsed a naturalised and idealised notion of motherhood, promoting the notion that motherhood was "the role that God ordained for women" (Kruger, 1991:198, 201). She states that according to this trope motherhood is given distinct religious, social and professional

¹⁰⁹ OB-women also made their homes available to dissidents and provided food and shelter. Mrs. Haasbroek, an OB-woman, allowed her husband to use her *bakoond* (oven) for drying ammunition that had become wet (Blignaut, 2012:90). According to Blignaut (2012:90), the barefoot-woman in front of the oven is symbolic of how the trope of the domesticated Afrikaner woman was used in support of the struggle. Although women were not allowed to be members of the more radical OB *Stormjaer* (Storm Troopers) faction, they still contributed to war resistance in a subversive manner (Blignaut, 2012:98).

¹¹⁰ Blignaut (2012:81-82) quotes C Marx's interpretation of this event: *The OB heroine Elsabe Nel epitomised the ideal Afrikaans woman. She possessed all the characteristics of the 'Afrikaner woman' for, according to the historical myth, it was the women who would rather cross 'the Drakensberg barefoot' than submit to the 'British yoke'. It was the women who showed tremendous courage, spurring their men in the face of adversity. They were therefore the most important guarantors for the future existence of the Afrikaner volk* [Author's emphasis].

¹¹¹ *Die Boerevrou*, a woman's magazine, was first published in 1919 by Mabel Malherbe.

status, as women are “supposed to rule the household and therefore indirectly rule the world as well”, as part of an imagined community (Kruger, 1991:315).¹¹²

The first nationalist women’s party was established in 1914. The women’s magazine *Die Burgeres* (The Female Citizen) actively campaigned for a more politically aware Afrikaner woman.¹¹³ The women’s parties pledged allegiance to the National Party and concentrated on fundraising and developing a politically informed membership (Vincent, 1999:59). Louise Vincent (1999:59) states that the women’s party regarded it as their duty to “encourage women to read, to improve health conditions in the towns and on farms, enhance their own knowledge, study educational problems and be able to offer considered opinions on the key political questions of the day”. She points out that Afrikaner woman, within political parties, actively campaigned for enfranchisement that was achieved in 1930 (Vincent, 1999:62). Their newly gained political power, however, was threatened by men who insisted on the dismantling of women’s parties for the greater good of the nation.¹¹⁴ Women were, therefore, called upon to sacrifice their newfound agency, as the *volk* needed them, and “future generations were relying upon them for the safety of the white civilisation” (Vincent, 1999:69).¹¹⁵

In the aftermath of the Anglo-Boer War, women’s organisations concentrated on welfare and charity as part of the advancement of poverty stricken Afrikaners, which consequently provided Afrikaner women with access to leadership in society (Vincent, 1999:55). To Afrikaner women’s welfare organisations, such as the ACVV (Afrikaans Christian Women’s Organisation), the previous focus on taking care of the family extended to include the welfare of the nation and more specifically the poor-white (Vincent, 2000:65). Many impoverished young urbanised Afrikaner women were employed in the multi-racial clothing industry (as

¹¹² Kruger (1991:314) argues that *volksmoeder* discourse, as part of Afrikaner nationalist discourse, led women “to believe that promoting the nation would not only benefit them as members of the nation, but also benefit them as women”.

¹¹³ This was followed by the *Transvaal Vroue Nasionale Party* (Transvaal Women’s National Party) in 1915. The African National Congress (ANC) formed in 1912 only accepted female members in 1943.

¹¹⁴ According to Vincent (1999:65), “[o]nce nationalist politics are cast as little more than a ‘family affair’ it becomes possible to argue that women not only have the right but the duty to be active participants in the political realm”.

¹¹⁵ According to Vincent (1999:65), the ‘mother of the nation myth’ was also evident in Britain “at the turn of the century which called upon women to perform their duty to prevent the decline of the imperial nation”.

members of the GWU) where they earned barely enough money to survive.¹¹⁶ The more affluent women, via organisations such as the ACVV, took it upon themselves to strive for the ‘elevation of morally suspect’ young working-class women. According to Vincent (200:67-68), female leaders in the GWU embraced a working-class identity as an alternative to ethnicity, claiming *volksmoeder* credentials such as resilience and diligence for themselves in response to their social marginalisation.¹¹⁷

Marijke du Toit (2003:156) examines the philanthropic women’s welfare societies of the early twentieth century (1904-1929) for an interpretation of Afrikaner female nationalist domesticity. Du Toit argues that various factors contributed to *volksmoeder* discourse, such as an Afrikaner ethnic identity, which was entangled with race, class, religion and language. The ACVV had close links with the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) via women such as Elizabeth Roos (married to a highly-placed minister in the church) and members married to affluent farmers, business men and members of Parliament (Du Toit, 2003:161). Their agenda was a philanthropic and racialized education of *kerk, volk en taal* (church, nation and language) as part of a maternalist discourse that predates Postma’s book on Boer women (Du Toit, 2003:161,163). Du Toit (2003:164) notes that these women combined an older pietistic religious discourse with “an idealised vision of motherhood and an articulation of maternal duty that focused on the privacy of the home”.¹¹⁸ She argues that Afrikaner male credence required women to “maintain their proper place in the gender hierarchy”, as “female subservience was sanctioned by God” and reinforced by the Dutch Reformed Church discourse from as early as the 1880s (Du Toit, 2002:171).¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ The GWU (Garment Workers Union) was founded in 1928 by the socialist Solly Sachs who served as General Secretary between 1928 and 1952. The industry employed women of all races; many being young impoverished recently urbanised young Afrikaner women. Sachs “successfully built up the Garment Workers Union (GWU) as a union primarily of Afrikaner and colored women in the textile and clothing industries on the Witwatersrand. By the mid-1930’s the industry employed nearly seventeen thousand white women, the overwhelming majority of them Afrikaners, and some three thousand colored women” (Giliomee, 2003:425).

¹¹⁷ According to Vincent (2000:74), although upset by the contempt they were regarded with by fellow Afrikaners, female factory workers rejected the GWU as an alternative ideological home and instead, “sought acceptance within the ranks of the ‘nation’ in which racial identity alone was a passport to approbation for even the most poor and marginal members”.

¹¹⁸ According to Du Toit (2003:166), Elisabeth Roos opposed enfranchisement and warned against modern education as it was a threat to traditional male and female roles. Roos suggested that women should teach their daughters “their true, domestic destiny, or future generations would no longer be content to remain at home” (Du Toit, 2003:166). Change in leadership of the ACVV during the early 1920s included career women such as Maria Elizabeth Rothmann (M.E.R.). Rothmann supported suffrage and encouraged women to keep the house as well as the nation in order, thereby extending responsibility to family, to include concern for the nation (Du Toit, 2003:175).

¹¹⁹ Du Toit (2002:171) quotes the following extract from *De Kerkbode* (1882) as an example of the Afrikaner paternal authority and female domesticity: de man [...] heft als hoofd des huizes het bestier, de leiding en het gezag van al de

The central ideological belief within the Afrikaner culture has been situated within a patriarchal religious identification with the dominant role of the man as the ruler of the household and *volk*, which consequently links authority with men and servitude with women. Evident in Postma and Stockenström's accounts of motherhood is that the Dutch Reformed Church, as the principal religious organisation amongst Afrikaners, played a significant role in spreading an idealised version of motherhood in service to the family, church and nation. If one is born into a society that subscribes to the notion that cultural beliefs are preordained by God, it provides the dominant group with unopposable authority, with resistance resulting in alienation from the group.

Elsabé Brink (2008:10) supports the idea that the Dutch Reformed Church (starting in the late 1880s) played a large role in popularising the notion that Afrikaner mothers' duties included an obligation to the church and *volk*, as demonstrated in the motto of the Cape Afrikaans Christian Women's Movement, "*Kerk, Volk en Taal*".¹²⁰ Brink (1990:273) argues that women in male-dominated societies, such as the Afrikaner patriarchy, attain access to agency within prescriptive roles in society, and that any challenge of the status quo would entail marginalisation by society in an attempt at maintaining its power.¹²¹ She maintains that both middle-class and working-class Afrikaner women identified with their *volksmoeder* roles, as it, firstly, provided legitimacy to their middle-class societal roles as wives, mothers and voluntary social and community workers, and secondly, provided the working class with an

leden in handen. Zijn wil moet wet zijn, waaraan allen zich met bereid willge gehoorzaamheid moeten onderwerpen...

As the head of the household, the husband is the master, the leader and the authority over all family members. His will must be law, to which all must subject themselves with willing obedience. (Author's translation).

¹²⁰ According to Brink (2008:277), the suffering, patriotism and heroism of Boer women during The Anglo-Boer War, "were added to the already existent image of Boer women" by cultural entrepreneurs such as Postma, his brother-in-law the poet Totius and Stockenström, who endeavoured to create an idealised image of the Boer women. According to Brink (2008:281), Totius's sister Marie Du Toit, as a lone voice in opposition to *volksmoeder* ideology, published the book *Vrou en feminist: Of iets oor die vroue-vraagstuk* (Woman and feminist: A contribution to a women's debate) 1921, in which she questioned these ideological construals of motherhood. The author M E Rothmann (MER), who was the only female member of the Carnegie Commission (1930-1932), conducted a study on female experiences within the poor-white problem in which she highlighted the impact of conceptions of class in society (Brink, 2008: 282). In the 1930s, Erica Theron, supervised by Dr H F Verwoerd, "conducted a similar investigation into the lives of 'coloured' and white women factory workers in Cape Town" (Brink, 2008: 283). Their contributions were vastly overshadowed though by those of male cultural entrepreneurs.

¹²¹ Julie Kelso (2007:1), a biblical scholar, draws a parallel between the historical silencing of female voices and the disavowal and repression of the maternal body in the book of Chronicles. The biblical book of Chronicles indicates chronological interpretations and the relaying of historical events from a strictly patriarchal perspective and genealogy. According to Kelso (2007:1), the strategies that have been used to silence the feminine "need to be understood in relation to the relative absence of women from the narrative of Chronicles". The early Afrikaner strongly identified with a Biblical interpretation of divine power, which relegated women to a supporting role for a patriarchal agenda.

identity (Brink, 1990:291).¹²² Working-class women, such as garment workers who were socially and economically prevented from joining the ASVF, nonetheless actively identified with their roles as stalwart successors of the iconic *Voortrekker* and Anglo-Boer War woman (Brink, 1990:290).¹²³ Brink (1990:273) comments on the construction of Afrikaner female identity of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as follows:

One of the means by which men in male-dominated societies control women is by giving them a well-defined but circumscribed position within society, to which some status, honour and respectability are attached. The parameters of this position, within which may be found the notion of 'ideal womanhood', may evade exact definition but yet be widely acknowledged and accepted. Women who, even partially, begin to question society and their role within it, lose the privileges of this position, because, having questioned social norms and structures, they are no longer as controllable; society loses its power over them.

This is supported by the political and cultural sociologist Joane Nagel (1998:243), who proposes that the scripts in which women's "roles are embedded are written primarily by men, and about men, and that women are, by design, supporting actors whose roles reflect masculinist notions of femininity and of women's proper 'place'". Nagel (1998:243) proposes that there is a definite division between male and female nationalist goals and agendas based on the gendered nature of states and nations, whereby women occupy prescriptive roles that are embedded in masculinist scripts. Anne McClintock (1995:353-55) endorses the notion that nationalism is always a discourse in which gender power plays a major role, and proposes that women in masculine nationalisms are often "typically

¹²² The SAVF (*Suid-Afrikaanse Vrouefederasie*), a welfare organisation consisting of middle-class Afrikaner women, in their quarterly publication titled *Vrou en Moeder*, maintained a strict religious orientation and encouraged women to build on the qualities of their foremothers (Brink, 2008:287). According to Brink (1990:288), these qualities involved "self-sacrifice, patriotism, religious commitment, moral conviction, determination, energy, courage, insight, and desire to serve one's fellow beings, love and profound compassion". Brink (1990:288) relates how A. Frost, a chairperson of the organisation for 30 years, was "hailed as a true *volksmoeder*" upon her death. Furthermore, her body "was conveyed to the cemetery in a Voortrekker wagon drawn by nurses employed at the SAVF Moedersbond Hospital in Pretoria. Her coffin was covered with the word *volksmoeder* written in flowers".

¹²³ According to Brink (1990:289), female GWU members used their publication and official mouthpiece, the *Garment Worker* (*Klerewerker*), to actively campaign for improvement of working conditions of their members and to publish literature and produce plays. Their writing was strongly influenced by *volksmoeder* ideology, particularly the Centenary celebrations (1938 *Tweede Trek*), and they elected to identify their struggles with those of the heroic *Voortrekker* women (Brink, 1990:289). According to Brink (1990:289) a garment worker, Anna Jacobs, in an article published in 1940, wrote as follows: "[w]e workers of our state and for all the women in the country shall take *the* lead and climb the Drakensberg again" (*Garment Worker/Klerewerker* February 1940). Brink (1990:292) maintains that working-class women succumbed to and identified with a *volksmoeder* identity due to their own fragmented identities within their community.

constructed as the symbolic bearers of the nation”. She states that the iconic *volksmoeder* role, as a means to white female power, concomitantly kept women trapped within disempowering domestic service to the patriarchy (McClintock, 1995:378).¹²⁴ McClintock (1993:71) argues that the Afrikaner agenda of creating a collective national unity relied on the realm of fetishism. This is evident in the *Eufees* (Centenary) celebrations and *Tweede Trek* (1938) (Second Trek) which served as a nationalist construction of a cohesive ethnic identity.¹²⁵

Liese Van der Watt (1998:91), like McClintock, turns to visual culture, namely the Voortrekker Monument tapestries, to ‘read’ the formation of patriarchal Afrikaner nationalism. The fifteen embroidered tapestry panels designed by W. H. Coetzer, commissioned by the VMB¹²⁶, made between 1952 and 1960, depict the life of the Boers during the Great Trek (Van der Watt, 1998:91-92). According to Van der Watt (1998:92), the underlying motivation for the choice of subject matter, the idyllic private family unit and the *volk* as public family, is a perpetuation of ideological constructions of *volksmoeder* identity that emerged in the first half of the twentieth century. The *volksmoeder*, apart from being a passive and suffering cornerstone of the household, enters the political domain when she is portrayed as a “central and unifying force within Afrikanerdom” (Van der Watt, 1998:93).¹²⁷

Ria van der Merwe (2011) relies on female students at the University of Pretoria (1920-1970) for an interpretation of the mutable ‘place’ and ‘role’ of Afrikaner women in a nationalist agenda of *volks* building. According to Van der Merwe (2011:86), the influence of Afrikaner

¹²⁴ McClintock (1995:379) argues that agency for mothers of the Afrikaner nation is a dynamic political manifestation that implicates women as participants within the nationalist agenda, whilst only allowing limited authority and no formal political power.

¹²⁵ She (1993:69) states that only one wagon forming part of the *Tweede Trek* spectacle was generically named *Vrou en Moeder*, while all the other wagons were named after male *Voortrekker* heroes. According to McClintock (1993:69), “[t]his wagon, creaking across the country, symbolized women’s relation to the nation as indirect, mediated through her social relation to men, her national identity lying in her unpaid services and sacrifices, through husband and family, to the *volk*”.

¹²⁶ *Vrouen en Moederbeweging van die ATKV* (Women and Mothers Association of the Afrikaans Organisation of Language and Culture).

¹²⁷ Van der Watt (1998: 94) proposes that the female art of embroidery serves as a signifier of sexual difference and reinforces the identity of Afrikaner women as mothers and homemakers. The tapestries reinforce the division between male and female roles and “the association of men with travelling and exploring, while women are associated more with settling and domesticity”, with the ox wagon as a home on wheels, serving as a signifier of “movement and stasis” (Van der Watt, 1998:97). *Volksmoeder* ideology is particularly evident in the portrayal of *Voortrekker* women’s dress that is always neat, fresh and clean, even in scenes depicting battles (Van der Watt, 1998: 102,103). According to Van der Watt (1998:103), ideological nationalist dialect reaches a climax in the last tapestry panel that attempts to tell “the entire frontier history of the Afrikaner in one glance”. This is also the only panel that focuses predominantly on the depiction of women, and *Voortrekker* women are seen carrying torches of light. Van der Watt (1998:103) argues that women serve as symbolic bringers of culture and civilisation to the chaos of darkness, “an ideology which confined women to the carefully guarded boundaries of what a woman’s role supposedly entailed, and effectively silenced them”.

nationalism within the University of Pretoria (UP) was reinforced after the victory of the National Party in 1948, and women's organisations such as the SAWF (South African Women's Federation) actively campaigned for the advancement of *volksmoeder* ideology at UP as early as 1927. The SAWF's focus was on establishing a Department of Social Work and the extension of Higher Education to include child welfare and nursery schools (Van der Merwe, 2011:88).¹²⁸ Female students were encouraged to study social work, as it would be beneficial to them as future mothers and would also contribute to the welfare of the nation (Van der Merwe, 2011: 88).¹²⁹ The wife of the rector of the university was deemed as a significant role model, with Prof. E. M. Hamman's wife hailed as a perfect example as she "gave up her teaching job when she married and became a 'homemaker', as this was regarded as the *volksmoeder's* highest calling" (Van der Merwe, 2011:92-93).¹³⁰

According to Van der Merwe (2011:93, 95), *volksmoeders* started to 'leave the laager' in the 1960s when a Christian national viewpoint was losing popularity amongst more enlightened urbanised students. Women were no longer needed as symbolic mothers of the nation resulting in a change in their traditional role, as demonstrated in the following NP electioneering advertisement which:

...showed a blond, buxom girl in a mini-dress seated upon a pile of newspapers, legs stretched out in front of her, beckoning a male student wearing a UP blazer to come and vote. At the bottom of the cartoon three worms were made to comment: "Pragtige ou volksmoedertjie, en tog so pligsgetrou!" (Beautiful little Volksmoeder, and so dutiful!) (Van der Merwe, 2011:97).

Elsie Cloete (1992:52) argues that Afrikaner women's conformation to their roles as *volksmoeders* constituted their first 'confinement', with their second 'confinement' starting

¹²⁸ According to Van der Merwe (2011:88), "[t]he Department of Social Work was officially started in 1929 and the SAWF gained a secure foothold on campus through which their ideas could be advanced".

¹²⁹ Van der Merwe (2011:89) states that the Domestic Science Department was established at UP in 1927 and subjects included "Laundry and Housewifery; Household and Institutional Management; and Hygiene and Nursing (including childcare and training)". An official alumni publication, the *Skakelblad* (Link magazine), encouraged female students to study Domestic Science as it would "prepare them to be good wives and mothers", and they included a "subtle hint that university was the ideal place to find a good husband" (Van der Merwe, 2011:89). In 1967 The Department of Nursing was established at UP and staff and student publications hailed nursing as the perfect career for "*agtermekaar dogters*" (capable girls) (Van der Merwe, 2011:90).

¹³⁰ According to Van der Merwe (2011:93), during the 1950s and 1960s two women were accepted to serve on the Student Council at the University of Pretoria, where they "were relegated to '*maar net blomme rangskik en teemaak*'" (flower arrangement and serving tea). The women who dared to demand a more progressive role in student life "often endured harsh criticism", and female students at UP had to adhere to strict dress codes and were not allowed to smoke on campus (Van der Merwe, 2011:93).

“in earnest once the Afrikaner had gained political and economic supremacy”. Their second ‘confinement’ driven by mass media, now that they are no longer needed by the *volk*, “is a more insidious confinement, which could be argued as being self-imposed, [and] entails a consistent and relentless discipline against the body” (Cloete, 1992:53).

This indicates that Afrikaner *volksmoeders* were ‘abandoned’ once their symbolic use-value to the *volk* had expired when the focus shifted to the maternal role per se. As argued by Brink (1990:291), “men presented – and women ultimately accepted – the socially sanctioned role embodied in the image of the *volksmoeder*”. And, as Cloete (1999:40-45) points out, the service of Afrikaner women as *volksmoeders* required them to ‘breast-feed’ the nation, but once the National Party achieved rule in 1961, *volksmoeders* were weaned from the nation, and were required to become ‘breast-feeders’ of the family again.¹³¹ This raises the point that Cloete makes regarding the ‘new confinement’ of women, and as Van der Merwe (2011:98) points out, whether their newfound freedom actually freed women of ‘the paternalistic yoke’.

Consistent with the current mission statement of *die Afrikaanse Höer Meisieskool Pretoria*, where OB stalwart Elsa Nel matriculated in 1940 (and where I was educated, and matriculated in 1975, 35 years after Elsa Nel), is the notion that Afrikaner girls have to conform to qualities, sanctioned by God, such as obedience, sacrifice and national pride. The following essential character traits are still valued according to the school’s current mission statement:

Character traits such as independence, perseverance, fastidiousness, neatness, accuracy, integrity, honesty, obedience, loyalty, courteousness, impeccable taste, sacrifice, and national pride should be cultivated. Love of the Fatherland is developed by teaching the learners to be true to themselves, their home and school, and to serve the group selflessly, and to pride themselves in their class, classroom, school and *volk* (nation). In all that we strive for, we honour the Creator and Almighty God, who rules over everything. Christian criteria are untouchable and above everything else. (My translation).¹³²

¹³¹ Cloete (1999:48) points out that the patriarchy ‘closes off’ women and demands complicity as part of the nationalist effort of nation building, but “once life settles down again, women’s issues run the risk of becoming ghettoised within nationalism”.

¹³² “*Eienskappe soos selfstandigheid, deursettingsvermoë, noukeurigheid, netheid, stiptheid, opregtheid, eerlikheid, gehoorsaamheid, lojaliteit, hoflikheid, fyn smaak, offervaardigheid en nasietrots moet aangekweek word. Vaderlandsliefde word ontwikkel deur die leerlinge te leer om lojaal aan hulleself, hulle huis en skool te wees en om die groep onselfsugtig te dien, asook om trots te wees op hul klas, klaskamer, skool en volk. Deur alles wat ons doen en nastrewe, vereer ons die Skepper en Almagtige God wat oor alles regeer. Die*

The school emblem that until early 2016 consisted of a girl in Voortrekker dress wearing a bonnet (kappie) is a copy of the original emblem of the first Afrikaans woman's publication *Die Boerevrou*. The emblem was replaced with a decorative scroll after considerable student protests at various universities in South Africa (2016) in resistance to historical representations of iconic colonial images and Afrikaans as language of instruction.¹³³ The school motto, '*Ek sien haar wen*' (I see her win), is an extract from Jan F. C. Cilliers' poem, '*By die Vrouebetoging*' (At the Woman's Protest): "*ek sien haar wen, deur lye net soos Hy; ek sien haar wen, vir man en seun en broeder, want haar naam is Vrou, en Moeder!*" (I see her win, through suffering such as His, for husband, son and brother, as her name is Wife and Mother!). It is apparent, as per this mission statement, that Afrikaner identity is still firmly entangled with religious dogma. Women are still expected to be obedient, self-sacrificing and willing to serve their family and *volk* selflessly.

Young Afrikaner women are required to, firstly, concentrate on their services to their class, secondly, the classroom, and, ultimately the *volk*. The class represents the family and the classroom serves as a home away from home, which indicates that domestic qualities are still of primary importance. When I attended the school from 1971-1975, *Huishoudkunde* (Domestic science) was a compulsory subject in grade 8 (then standard 6), and we were taught baking, cooking, sewing and knitting. The class, as a substitute for the family, is a microcosm of the nation (*volk*) endorsed by a patriarchal religion which renders the objectives sacrosanct.

Evident in *volksmoeder* ideology, therefore, is that twentieth century Afrikaner patriarchal culture was founded on the dominant fantasy of the maternal body serving as receptacle/container for cultural reproduction, as demonstrated in Afrikaner women's service to the nation. Their roles as mothers extended to include a unified identity of cultural preservers and reproducers of the nation. They served as empty receptacles, ready to receive and reproduce, but without the opportunity to produce or partake in the cultural Symbolic as equals. The foremost fantasy associated with the maternal body has been that of a volume, as a receptacle or container for the (re)production of dominant discourse (Irigaray, 1991:28). The Afrikaner folk legend of Racheltjie de Beer, which I encountered at an early age, was regarded as the ultimate patriotic goal that any young Afrikaner girl could strive for, namely

Christelike maatstamwe is die onaantasbare bo alles"

http://www.abmp.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2&Itemid=9 [Accessed 2016, October 1].

¹³³ This is being contested by a 'concerned group of old *Affies*' who have enlisted the services of an attorney, as they are unhappy about the removal of the iconic image of the "*boerenootjies*" (Boer girl.)

self-sacrifice.¹³⁴ The legendary Racheltjie de Beer was a young girl who was lost in the *veld* with her younger brother during winter while searching for missing farm animals.¹³⁵ Racheltjie apparently chose to sacrifice her life, by dressing her brother in her clothes, in order to shield him from the cold, using her body to keep him warm and safe from certain death. According to this trope women are of lesser value than men, and the ultimate service would be to sacrifice one's life in order to preserve the masculine. The legend reads like an uncanny tale as Racheltjie sacrifices her life by placing her brother in a disused termite mound, a symbolical womb, which shielded him from the harsh weather and certain death. The masculine survived by re-entering a metaphorical womb, to be reborn at the cost of female life.

The discussion above demonstrates how Afrikaner women have been implicated in a nationalist agenda, whether perceived as active agents or disempowered subordinates. It is also evident that Afrikaner women, as *volksmoeders*, were 'abandoned' once their symbolic use-value to the *volk* had expired. Elsabé Brits (2016:188) states that based on Emily Hobhouse's exposure to the fate of women in South Africa during the Anglo-Boer War and early twentieth century, Emily had come to realise that women had little "control over their own lives and that they were often the victims of decisions and actions of men who had no intention of relinquishing their position of power". As Oliver (2004: 135) argues, "[w]omen are put in the paradoxical position of having to endorse a social code that devalues them and represses the maternal body as something natural rather than cultural". Afrikaner women's identities were firmly entangled with their maternal roles that required them to serve as the unifying foundation on which an Afrikaner ethnic identity was constructed.¹³⁶ It is within these prescriptive criteria that they facilitated the perpetuation of a patriarchal society. *Volksmoeders*, therefore, accessed sublimation via ideological supportive roles that demanded characteristic qualities such as stoicism, suffering, sacrifice, impeccable moral standards, religious devotion, patriotism and nurturance of family and *volk*.

¹³⁴ The legendary story of Racheltjie de Beer, an apparent historical figure, which was presented as fact when I was at school, has subsequently been identified as fictitious. Berger (1990:31) notes that, in order to maintain the validity of the social order, it becomes necessary to legitimise social control, in the form of "proverbs, moral maxims and traditional wisdom", which may be transmitted "in the form of myths, legends, or folk tales", as demonstrated in the legendary folk tale of Racheltjie de Beer.

¹³⁵ The choice of the name Racheltjie most probably relates to the Biblical figure, of the suffering Rachel, in The Old Testament.

¹³⁶ As argued by McClintock (1993:61): "nations are not simply phantasmagoria of the mind, but are historical and institutional practices through which social difference is invented and performed. Nationalism becomes, as a result, radically constitutive of people's identities, through social contests that are frequently violent and always gendered".

Ideological and prescriptive constructions of ideal womanhood were not confined to South African women per se, as their British counterparts had little political means to improve their status and received inferior vocational training that limited career opportunities (Brits, 2016:188). Although British women obtained franchise in 1918, it was only granted to property owners over the age of 30, and equal franchise was only achieved in 1928. According to Betty Friedan (1963:15), American women of the mid twentieth century were indoctrinated, via magazine articles, books and columns, to conform to an idealised role of the suburban homemaker and mother as “they could desire no greater destiny than to glory in their own femininity”.¹³⁷

In the following chapter I will reconstruct and recount the experiences of three of my female ancestors based on their diary entries, texts, photographs and personal objects, in order to demonstrate how women become complicit in patriarchal discourses as a means to agency. My intention is not to speak for women as a unified group, but to concentrate on the narratives of three Afrikaner women as mothers within specific cultural and social contexts and eras, in contribution to the collective stories of all women.

¹³⁷ Friedan (1963:16) argues that by the mid-fifties, succumbing to the ‘trap of the suburban housewife’, 60% of American women had dropped out of college to marry or because they were worried that a decent education would get in the way of marriage.

Chapter 5

5. An exploration of the diaries and archives of three Afrikaner women (1799-2008).

There is a genealogy of women within our family: on our mothers' side; we have mothers, grandmothers and great-grandmothers, and daughters. Given our exile in the family of the father–husband, we tend to forget this genealogy of women, and we are often persuaded to deny it. Let us situate ourselves within this female genealogy so as to conquer and keep our identity. Nor let us forget that we already have a history, that certain women have, even if it was culturally difficult, left their mark on history and that all too often we do not know them (Irigaray 1991:44).

In the previous chapter I explored the subject positions accorded to Afrikaner women as mothers within a patriarchal society. The previous discussion reveals that the construction of an Afrikaner ethnic identity was informed by a punitive neo-Calvinist conviction that placed power firmly in the hands of the patriarchy. Within this ethos the subjectivity of Afrikaner women was mapped out to align with the idea that power lies with the male God and his son, and thus with the patriarchy. Implicit in this cultural ethos of *volk* and *vaderland* (nation, homeland/land of the father) was the belief that women serve a secondary role which excludes them from equal access to power and meaning-making. Sublimation is directly reliant on the opportunity to transform affects and drives into socially acceptable forms of signification within a cultural Symbolic. Afrikaner women, therefore, served as child bearers, homemakers, wives, and mothers, in service to others and the nation, with homemaking and motherhood providing access to sublimatory meaning-making.

Afrikaner women are subsequently re-implicated in patriarchal agendas for 'choosing' the only access to sublimation available to them. This serves as a double colonisation when their maternal roles, which have been colonised by the patriarchy, are re-colonised when they receive inadequate recognition for their historical service to humankind. Oliver (2004: 164-165) points out that without granting value to the ordinary experiences of everyday life, such as those found within domestic spaces where "the extraordinary manifests itself in the ordinary", women remain excluded from adequate sublimation of their drives and affects.

In this chapter, and in support of re-storying Susanna Smit's diary, I explore my maternal genealogy based on the archives (incidental 'journals') of my mother and grandmother. I introduce this exploration with short biographical overviews of the three women followed by an exploration of their journals, and conclude with a discussion of the mother-daughter relationship, pietism, domesticity and maternal subjectivity as sublimation. My interest in Smit's diary concerns her subjectivity as a woman, and, therefore, a marginalised member of a nineteenth century patriarchal society. The journals of my mother and grandmother, both deceased, provide a method to explore their experiences as mothers and members of a twentieth century patriarchal Afrikaner society. The intertextual nature of these incidental journals/archives demonstrates the complex nature of female roles and duties within a family, culture and society. Such journals and archives of 'ordinary' homemakers do not necessarily conform to traditional and chronological diary entries; instead, they represent everyday personal experiences and events that map the life of domestic female subjects.

Objects that reflect domestic discourse and private spaces of women provide concrete and powerful metaphorical and representational reminders of personal lives within specific historical, economic, and cultural contexts. Stephen Riggins (1994:108-109) proposes that when one uses domestic objects as data for the narrative constructions of experiences, the objects serve as "entry points for the telling of stories about the self", and that the process of explicating these objects becomes a form of mapping. Mapping is a method of connecting dots, which can be retraced in any direction (Riggins, 1994:109). In an attempt to start connecting the dots in my maternal genealogy, I unpack these fragmented, tangible and intimate reminders of lived experiences in order to start filling the gaps in the histories of ordinary women.

According to Sherry Turkle (2007:5), personal objects could be regarded as evocative "companions to our emotional lives or as provocations to thought". She proposes, seeing that "we live our lives in the middle of things", objects have a close emotional connection to "our daily lives" (Turkle, 2007:7). She suggests that objects are "evocative", serve many purposes and carry a history (Turkle, 2007:305-317). Turkle (2007:9-10) states as follows: "[f]or Freud, when we lose a beloved person or object, we begin a process that, if successful, ends in our finding them again, within us. It is, in fact, how we grow and develop as people". In this regard, she suggests as follows:

The psychodynamic tradition – in its narrative of how we make objects part of ourselves – offers a language for interpreting the intensity of our connections to the world of things, and for discovering the similarities in how we relate to the animate and inanimate. In each case, we confront the other and shape the self” (Turtle, 2007:10).

Olivia Dasté (2007:247-248), while unpacking a suitcase that belonged to her grandmother, recalls her memories of her deceased grandmother:

The suitcase brings her back to me with the worry that I will lose her if I open the suitcase too often; her smell will evaporate, the letters will fade, and the clothes will no longer hold her shape. I think she would tell me to live with the living and to be careful: craziness runs in the family.

My ancestral archives provide me with a method to explore experiences and memories as part of my effort to start creating a genealogical memory of these women. Elizabeth Yakel (2004:1) suggests that genealogy, family history, and the search for ancestors, provide a method to “finding one’s own identity in the present”. She proposes that the search and investigation of family history should be regarded as “an ongoing process of seeking meaning” and forms part of creating “a larger narrative”, and “to find coherence in one’s own life” (Yakel, 2004:1).

5.1. Biography of Susanna Catharina Smit (born Maritz) (1799-1863)

Susanna Catharina Smit (born Maritz) was born on 28 August 1799 in Graaff-Reinet on the eastern border of the then Cape Colony. Smit’s father, Salomon Maritz, married her mother, Maria Elizabeth Oosthuizen, when Maria was 15 years old. Susanna was the third of their seven children. The family was relatively poor and (as the majority of frontier burghers of the time) were God fearing Christians. According to the following entry in her diary Susanna felt marginalised by her family and did not enjoy a happy childhood (Schoeman, 2003: 20–21): “I was the most oppressed, even in my family home. Of all my mothers’ children, I was the least loved in my family home. My childhood was bitterly unhappy and I often found myself

sitting crying on a chair somewhere in a corner.”¹³⁸ Her family and community demanded discipline and obedience from their children, as demonstrated in a diary entry where she questions the use of corporal punishment and shaming (Schoeman, 2003:21): “Do not beat your children if there is a possibility to rather caution them, and even worse, the most awful thing, some parents even mock their children”.¹³⁹

According to Schoeman (2003: 46), Salomon and Maria Maritz and their children had attained an above average level of education compared to most of the people in the area whose education generally only consisted of basic reading, writing and arithmetic skills. The goal of education amongst the white burghers of the time was to enable every person to reach the necessary reading and writing skills needed for confirmation of their vows. After Susanna’s confirmation of her vows at the age of 13, her mother (with the consent of her father) arranged for her to be married to the missionary Erasmus Smit. At the age of 35, Erasmus Smit was the same age as Susanna’s mother. Susanna felt herself unable and too fearful to resist the arranged marriage, as it would have amounted to opposing the will of her parents, and above all, the will of God (Schoeman, 2003:53):

I submitted to the will of my parents from an early age, which caused me not to oppose marrying a man of my mother’s choice. I believed my destiny to be in the hands of God, and I was too afraid to resist His will. This caused me to meekly submit to everything, although unwillingly, as I was afraid that my punishment would be even worse than what lay in store for me.¹⁴⁰

The reason given by Schoeman (2003:33) for the missionary zeal amongst some women of the time is a need for emotional support caused by isolated conditions, repeated pregnancies and endless hard work. Landman (1994:vii) maintains that Afrikaner women’s identification with pietistic forms of religion was motivated by their submission to the patriarchal demands of men, the nation, and God, which caused them to seek a personal relationship with Jesus. Raath (2016:181,187) proposes their devotional commitment to be a ‘psychic phenomena’ (hallucinatory psychic contents) forming part of their longing for a ‘spiritual union with

¹³⁸ “...Ik was de meest verdrukten...zelfs in mijn ouders’ huis, de minste geliefde onder de kinderen mijner moeder...mijne kindsheid was bitter... gunter in een boek op een stoel zit te snikken...”

¹³⁹ “Slaat niet wanneer er een kans is om te vermanen...dan is er nog een allerlindige iets, dat is sommige ouders hunne kinderen bespotten” (My translation).

¹⁴⁰ “Dat bragt mij al vroeg tot onderverpeng aan het ouderlijk bestier, en maakte dat ik zonder tegenspreken den man trouwde die mijn moeder mij gad, geloovende dat God het lot der menschen beskikte naar zijnen wille, en den vrees van mij tegen God te verzetten, maakte mij gedwee in alles, ofschoon ik ook den scherpten der onwil voelde, zocht ik mij onder den hand van God te buigen, uit vrees iets ergers van Hem al seen strafe mijner onwil te ontvangen (My translation).

Christ' brought on by trauma and isolated living conditions.¹⁴¹ Yet Maria Maritz's involvement in missionary work was frowned upon by the community and resented by some of her immediate family members.

The age of 13 was considered young for marriage, even at the time, but Susanna Smit passively submitted to a life of sacrifice and servitude without foreseeing the consequences. It is obvious that Susanna's mother did not consider the emotional happiness of her daughter when she arranged a marriage that her daughter did not approve of. One can assume that, due to Susanna's diary entries in which she bemoans the fact that she was the least loved in her family home, her mother's decision was motivated by the fact that Susanna was a headstrong girl. As her future husband was a 'man of God', the possibility of resisting the marriage would have constituted a rejection of her family, culture and faith. Susanna often referred to her husband as 'the old gentleman S', 'the old preacher' or 'the old brother Smit' in her diary. This provides evidence that she regarded him as her elder, and was thus intimidated and unable to experience herself as his equal.¹⁴² Erasmus also kept a diary in which he referred to Susanna's mother as 'mother Maritz', while at the same time referring to his own wife as 'mother Smit'. At the age of 13, Susanna became an unwilling sexual partner and domestic servant to an adult man who was her intellectual inferior, and whom she did not love.

Erasmus, whose mother died when he was barely a year old, grew up in an almoner's orphanage in Holland where his father had placed him.¹⁴³ At the age of 15 he was entitled to choose a trade within which to receive training, and Smit chose to be trained as a tailor. He elected to stay on working at the orphanage for two more years after he turned 21, at which age orphans were to leave the orphanage in order to become self-sufficient (De Jongh, 1977:9). After receiving only two and a half months of missionary training, Erasmus and two others left for the Cape Colony in 1809 (De Jong, 1977:14). Complaints about his behaviour towards his peers already started on the voyage from Holland, and he was criticised for not keeping a diary according to instructions from the Dutch missionary society (De Jongh, 1977:21). Erasmus Smit was neither well liked nor respected by his peers who accused him of being quick at taking offense at anything remotely deemed as criticism. He had an obvious dislike of subordination, a need for recognition, and apparently suffered from feelings of

¹⁴¹ Raath (2016) mentions the following frontier women who subscribed to a pietistic form of devotion: Hendrina Cecilia Kruger (1744), Christiana Louisa Thom (1788-1816), Susanna Smit (1799-1863), and Hester Venter (baptised 1750).

¹⁴² She also refers to him as "*den oude Gods man*" (the old man of God) (Book 1: 40), and as, "*henne oude Leeraar*" (the old minister) (Book, 1: 23). (My translation).

¹⁴³ Erasmus Smit's father died when Erasmus was eight years old.

inferiority and a fear of rejection (De Jongh, 1977:8). The prospect of marrying a fearful and subservient child, who would not contest his authority, would clearly have suited his disposition.¹⁴⁴

Susanna gave birth to her first son (George) on 10 July 1814, at the age of 14, and her second and last child, another son (Salomon), was born on 30 May 1816 (Puddu, 1996:25). Unlike Susanna Smit who gave birth to only two children, *Voortrekker* women were generally subjected to multiple pregnancies. Susanna never made any mention in her diary of wanting more children of her own, although she seemed to have been a devoted mother to her two sons. A possible reason for only having two children could be that Susanna found herself unwilling to submit to her 'conjugal duties'. Erasmus found her fervent identification with her faith annoying, and one may assume that it might have offered her an escape from an unwanted physical relationship with him. Susanna's duties as a wife included cooking and baking, making candles and soap, as well as handwork and sewing (Schoeman, 2003:67).¹⁴⁵ She did all the sewing for the family although her husband had originally been trained as a tailor.

Erasmus was unpopular amongst the free-burghers, as he was quick to lose his temper after over-indulging in alcohol, and was accused of physically assaulting various people. An official report by Stockenström, upon visiting a missionary station where Erasmus Smit was serving, describes Smit as being a hard-headed and overbearing person who had failed in his duties (Schoeman, 2003:68). The family was not financially well off and as a wife's status depended on the status of her husband, Susanna enjoyed little recognition within her community. Erasmus Smit resigned from his post of missionary on 14 June 1832, stating ill health and old age (although he was in his early fifties) as the reasons, but according to Puddu (1996:26), the real reason for his inability to execute his duties was caused by his drinking habit.

¹⁴⁴ Landman (1999:39) gives the following character sketch of Erasmus Smit and of their marriage: "A lifetime of humiliation and instability lay before the teenager with her fragile emotions. During the next 20 years she had to move from mission station to mission station with her husband, who was incompetent, drank too much and suffered from a communication problem".

¹⁴⁵ Susanna was responsible for all the hard work, especially after the death of their son Salomon, as demonstrated by the following entries in Erasmus's journal (Preller 1918: 77, 149): "*Woensdag 19 Juli. Ook klaagt mijn vrouw over zware pijnen, die 't koude water haar veroorzaakt heft met klederen wassen bij de rivier*"; *Woensdag, 8 Aug. Moeder Smit slachtte en werken veel aan twee schapen: één voor ons en één voor hare moeder; die op 'n bezoek tot ons gekomen is uit 't leger van haar zoon G. Maritz*". (Wednesday 19 July. My wife also complained of severe body aches caused by having to wash clothes in the cold river. Wednesday 8 August. Mother Smit is slaughtering and processing two sheep, one for us and one for her visiting mother, who lived in Gerrit Maritz's laager). (My translation).

Susanna and her husband had to live with her brother Gerrit Maritz, who was considered to be financially successful, and the Smits were partly dependant on him while Erasmus was unemployed. Due to their financial predicament and her husband's unpopularity, Susanna and her husband decided to join the Great Trek, as she explains (Book 4:17-18)¹⁴⁶:

The reason we joined the emigration from the Colony to the area of Port Natal where my husband was not oppressed, is due to the severe oppression and harsh misfortune we endured in the Cape of Good Hope.¹⁴⁷

They were obliged to borrow a wagon from Gerrit Maritz in order to join their fellow burghers on the Great Trek (1836) and had to rely on others for oxen (Schoeman 2003: 86). As discussed previously, Susanna Smit is mainly remembered for her legendary interaction with Commissioner Cloete after their arrival in Pietermaritzburg, which led to her iconic *volksmoeder* status in Afrikaner history.¹⁴⁸ Susanna's early suffragette activism was subsequently appropriated by a patriarchal nationalist agenda in embellishment of the self-sacrificing Afrikaner *volksmoeder* myth. It is significant that some male authors refer to Susanna mainly in her capacity as a wife. For instance, she is mentioned in J. C. Kannemeyer's *Geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse literatuur* (History of Afrikaans Literature) (1978: Volume I), in a footnote and as an addendum to the section on Erasmus Smit's diary, as follows: "*Verder het sy vrou ook 'n dagboek gehou (...)*" (His wife also kept a diary) (Schoeman, 2003:265). Giliomee (2003:169) refers to Susanna as: "the redoubtable Susanna Smit" and as "the sister of Gert Maritz and Stephanus Maritz, who at the time was chairman of the *Volksraad*, and the wife of Erasmus Smit", and as "head of a delegation of Afrikaner women who gave Cloete a baptism of fire".

As Susanna Smit became, in male writing, both a cipher for the supplementary status of female *trekkers* as well as an example of the *volksmoeder* who valiantly stands by her man, female writers and scholars see in her an example of female agency and resistance. In 1981, Antjie Krog included six poems in her publication *Otters in Bronslaai*, based on interpretations of Susanna's legendary resistance to British colonisation.¹⁴⁹ Similarly,

¹⁴⁶ *De zware verdrukkingen bittere rampen die wij in de Kolonie Kaap de Goedehoop heft moete lijden of dienen tot de grote Emigracie naar de gewesten van Port Nathal ware mijn Man niet verdrukt geweest...*

¹⁴⁷ My translation.

¹⁴⁸ Ironically, she never refers to this in her diary.

¹⁴⁹ This sparked an interest in Susanna's diary, and caused Kannemeyer to include the following reference to Susanna's writing in Volume II of his *Geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse literatuur* (1983) (History of Afrikaans literature): "*die godsdienstige insigte van en mistieke inslag van 'n oorgevoelige vrou*" (the religious insights and mystical inclination of a hyper-sensitive woman) (Schoeman, 2003:266). My translation.

McClintock (1991:109) refers to Susanna as follows: “[a]t the beginning of the Great Trek, so the story goes, Susanna Smit, the hefty wife of Reverend Erasmus Smit, threatened to cross the mountains barefoot rather than genuflect to the perfidious Union Jack”. The South African author Margaret Bakkes published a historical romance, with Susanna Smit as the protagonist, *Susanna die geliefde* (Our beloved Susanna) in 2003, which declares a strong identification with Susanna Smit amongst Afrikaner women.

Susanna’s brother Gerrit Maritz, a successful businessperson and respected leader of the community who subsequently became a leader in the Great Trek, was venerated for being a forceful and well-built man, whereas Susanna, who had the self-same qualities, was denied the means to put them to good stead.¹⁵⁰ Schoeman (2003:248) mentions that Ds. Kestell, who knew both the Smits at the time of their stay in Pietermaritzburg, identified Susanna as the dominant spouse:

The two were contrasting personalities: Susanna Catharina Maritz always acted powerfully. Erasmus Smit was more reticent of nature although he was capable of forceful behaviour at times. To a stranger it seemed as if she was the one who dictated the general tone in their home. Erasmus once told my father: ‘Petrus says that woman is the weaker vessel, when she is actually the stronger one.’ His spouse, nonetheless, always respected him and was concerned for his well-being (My translation).

Her second, and favourite, son Salomon, who had accompanied them on the Great Trek, died on 28 July 1837. In the following entry she mentions the death of her son (Book 6:6):

On 28 July 1937 God ripped my heart apart, and due to His will, a beloved and dearest to me, at the age of 21 years and two months and two days, was tossed away to putrefy.¹⁵¹

Susanna Smit never left Pietermaritzburg where she had settled, with her husband, in a small house in Berg Street. Susanna did not have a boudoir to which she could retire for reflection as she lived in a humble three-roomed house consisting of a “*voorhuis*” (living room), a

¹⁵⁰ Thom (1965:no page number) in the foreword of his biography on Maritz, which he sees as a tribute to the Trekker leader, describes Maritz as follows: “a strong personality”, “having a sense of humour”, “well loved”, “serious and God fearing”, “good looking”, “a large strong man”, “someone instantly noticed” and “an exceptional person”.

¹⁵¹ *Julie 28 1837, toen scheurde God my het harte, en zyne wil wierp een dierbaren tot myn lichaam in den ouderdom van 21jaren en twee maanden en twee dagen tot de verrotting...*

bedroom and a study where Erasmus Smit spent his time amongst his books. Susanna's 'space' was a small table in the living room, at a window next to the front door (Schoeman, 2003:247-248). Susanna Smit died at the age of 63, followed by the death of her husband within a week, leaving behind her son George, and 2 grandchildren whom she had never met.

5.2. The diary of Susanna Catharina Smit.

Susanna, unlike her husband Erasmus Smit, who kept a journal during the Great Trek (consisting of mainly factual entries), only started her diary once they had settled in Pietermaritzburg.¹⁵² The entries in Susanna's diary span a period of 16 years, from 16 February 1843 to 17 January 1859. Susanna never referred to her books as a 'diary', instead describing them as "*aantekeningsblaaides*" (notes) or "*boekjes*" (small books) (Schoeman, 2003:162). The books were handmade, using sheets of paper (size A4), which she folded in half and stitched together in the centre, using a needle and cotton. Although she spoke a form of pidgin 'Dutch', closely linked to modern Afrikaans, Susanna Smit wrote in formal Dutch (with minor entries in English), it being the language in which she was schooled, as well as the language of the church.



Figure 5. Susanna Smit's diary. Photo: M. De Beer 2012.

¹⁵² The earliest existing diary entry is dated 16 February 1843, four months after Henry Cloete arrived in Pietermaritzburg (Schoeman, 2003:160).

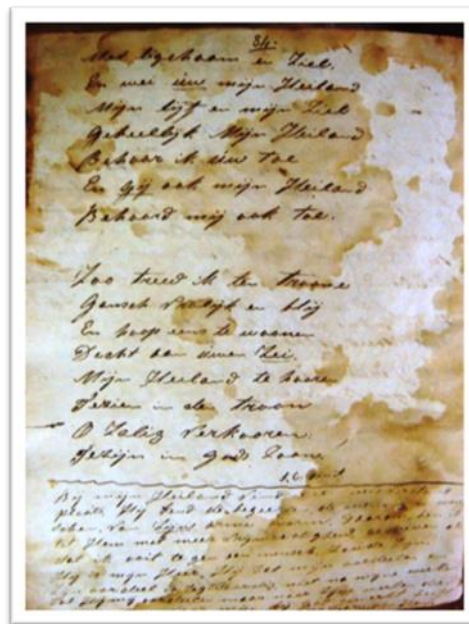


Figure 6. Sample page. Photo: M. De Beer 2012.

Susanna's diary entries mostly consist of her pious religious reflections and 'conversations' with God and his son, her visions and insights, her concern about her surviving son's lack of religious observance, the status of her deceased son's soul, and her alienation within the community. Her diary entries bear evidence of her fluctuating depressive emotional state, which shifts from feelings of abandonment by God, accompanied by a self-denigrating confession of sin, to praising God's greatness and mercy. She often complains of suffering from debilitating headaches, and frequently raises concerns about her husband's precarious standing in society and the resultant lack of income. Also included in her writing are hostile interactions with certain community members, her 'enemies', who she refrains from mentioning by name. She never admits to her husband's alcoholism, instead choosing to bemoan his persecution by the community. Her diary also provides valuable evidence of female spirituality and mystical Pietism in nineteenth century frontier life.

On 28 August 1844 she refers to herself as having a sinful heart and guilty body, likening herself to a lowly worm (Book 10:46):

But, oh! What can a worm bring as an offering of dignity to the Lord? A guilty body, a sinful heart, stuffed with sin and iniquity, who has the pride and

audacity to dare ask my Lord the creator: “how long Lord, will your hand push me down, for how long will your rod come down on me...”¹⁵³

A few pages further she feels oppressed, humiliated and mistreated (caused by her son George’s divorce and debt)¹⁵⁴ (Book 10: 48-71):

...in a world where we are, due to our poverty and standard of living, hated, criticised, mocked, reviled, slandered, laughed at, blamed and mistreated...¹⁵⁵

...I am currently struggling due to a serious disaster, from which I would escape if I could...¹⁵⁶

The fact that my child insults and reviles Christ is a disaster that outweighs all sorrow.¹⁵⁷

Susanna’s self-beratement is incessant, as demonstrated in the following self-referrals in her diary Saturday 5 May 1846: “But alas, I inhabit a body bristling with sin”¹⁵⁸ (Book 22:15); October 1845 “I am the poorest and most unworthy of all that crawls around on this earth” (Book 18:32).¹⁵⁹ Susanna often castigates and berates herself for feeling angry and frustrated, “O Lord! Deliver me from evil and take away my angry and wicked temper, and make me meek...” (Book 4:36).¹⁶⁰

Raath (2016:178) proposes that Susanna strove to purify her sinful soul by means of bridal metaphors, as the enunciation of union between God and the purified soul that has been “cleaned and purified through the blood of Christ”. According to Raath (2016:178), “[t]he bridegroom takes the soul and marries himself to the soul with an eternal binding”, similar to

¹⁵³ *Maar ach! Wat zal den worm, de smaade Den Heeren ten offer bringen? Een schuldig lijf een zondig hart, op gepropt van zonden en onrechtig beeden, die trots en vermeteld, aan de Heer mijn schepper durft vragen, Hoelang Heere zal uwe hand mij terneder drukken, hoe lang zal uwe roede op mijn zijn ja....* (My translation).

¹⁵⁴ Her first son, George, who had stayed behind in the Colony, eventually followed his parents to Pietermaritzburg in 1845, after borrowing money from them to assist with his wife and two daughters’ move to Natal. His wife refused to accompany him though, even after he returned to the Colony to fetch her, after which George divorced her. Susanna therefore never met her only two grandchildren (Schoeman, 2003:197). George appeared in court in 1847 on charges of financial embezzlement, of which he was acquitted, but his good name remained tarnished (De Jongh, 1977:189). In November 1849, he was instructed to repay a debt, and in 1850 he was sentenced to three days in jail for slander (De Jongh, 1977:189).

¹⁵⁵ *...in een waereld waar wij van wegen onzen armoede, en ver zijden levenswijze zoo als het wêrld bet noemt, geheet, gesmaad, geboond, gescholden, gelasterd, belagen, verguist, mishandeld worden...* (My translation).

¹⁵⁶ *...thans heb ik te worstelen onder een zwaren ramp, die ik gaarne zouden willen ontvlugten, maar ik kan niet...* (My translation).

¹⁵⁷ *Dat den Here Jezus door mijn kind geboond versmaad wordt, is een ramp die bij mij alle ramppen alle smarten op weegt* (My translation).

¹⁵⁸ *Maar ach ik woon in een ligchaam die van zonden wemeld* (My translation).

¹⁵⁹ *Arm en Ellendig de gansen onwaardigsten van al dat op de aarden kruipt* (My translation).

¹⁶⁰ *O Heer! Verlost mij van den boezen en neemt weg dat Godloose drift uit mijn slegt humeur en maak mij zoo zachtmoedig...* (My translation).

the strong bonds “with which a husband can attach himself to his wife”. According to Landman (1994:70), to Susanna, God was a vengeful Father who had to be feared, and she was his child who loved but feared her Father at the same time. It was to the son of God that she turned for solace, and she ironically identifies him with salvation, suffering, forgiveness, and regards him as her heavenly bridegroom (Landman, 1994:39).¹⁶¹ Susanna’s reliance on her spiritual relationship with Jesus as her companion is demonstrated in the following diary entries: (Book 28:30): “I fondly remember the time when my spiritual bridegroom suddenly looked me in the eye”; (Book 18:10): “You know Your hand-maid, You know Lord, that she never seeks help from humans, but rather looks up to You, for external needs as well as for her deprived soul...”.¹⁶²

On 21 January 1847 Susanna penned a series of poems in which she demonstrates her passionate relationship with the Lord, of which the following are extracts (Book 28:9):

Therefore, I sing praise all round
for my worthiest bridegroom.
no one walks between me and my beloved
and I feel free to speak of him.¹⁶³

According to Raath (2016:180), “ecstatic intellectual and mystical dreams are abundant in Susanna Smit’s spiritual diaries”, and the preference for isolation, meditation and spontaneous mystical experiences provided her with consolation. Raath (2003:143-144) proposes that mystical experiences, such as Susanna’s dreams and visions, formed part of theological resistance to seventeenth and eighteenth century rationalism and the impact of

¹⁶¹ Landman (1991:39) comments on Susanna’s ardent identification with Jesus as her saviour and spiritual bridegroom as follows: “[i]t was during these 20 years of wandering and struggling for physical and emotional survival, her fate dependent on a bad-tempered and non-achieving husband, that Jesus visited Susanna as her bridegroom. His touch, his kisses, his embrace were soft and reassuring. He was sensitive and loving. While her husband brought humiliation, insecurity and emotional turbulences, Jesus was holy; he offered safety and peace”. Landman (1999:37-38) ascribes Susanna’s piety to have been moulded by her dire personal circumstances, and argues that “in the absence of a caring mother and husband, she dreamt of Jesus first as her mother and then her bridegroom, eventually establishing herself, as mother to the suffering Christ. Again, “mysticism” and ‘sexual frustration’ cannot account for these images, but a desperate longing to be liberated from an unloving world, a world which forced women into positions of powerlessness and mindless acceptance”.

¹⁶² *Hoe klaar herbinnerd ik mij dien stond toen des geestes bruidegom mij zoo snel als in het aangezicht keek O! “Gij kend uwen diensmaagd, gij weet Heere, nooit zoekt zij hulp bij menschen, maar ziet tot u op, zoo wel voor het uitwendigen, als voor de behoeften van haren arme ziel...”* (My translation).

¹⁶³ *Daarom zingt ik d’ lof alom
van mijn waardste Bruidegom
niemand stappe toch tusschen
mij en mijn liefste in als ik te
vrij ben met van hem te spreken*
(My translation).

personal and political turmoil in her community. In an entry dated Saturday morning 18 December 1847 (Book 37:1-20), Susanna records a fitful night during which she was plagued by a very bad headache, and upon awakening, had the following detailed ‘vision’:

It was a vision in which I was returning on a road with a newly planted grove. It was as if I was finding myself on the outskirts of town, on a road leading down, where I met the Lord, who was shrouded in a cape, but without a hat. His head and cape were sprayed with droplets of dew. He was coming out of his pomegranate-garden, beautiful and alert as red dawn, light and quick of step. He looked at me, glad to have met me along the way. Unconstrained joy shone from his face and He smiled at me, with his enchanting eyes filled with grace and love.¹⁶⁴

The following entries on September 1845 bear evidence of her unhappiness (Book 10: 63):

Lord, I will not cease from crying out to You, day and night, until you help me, until you help me, it is to thee I must go. Where should I pour out my distress and my worries? Is there any other place than at Jesus’s feet?¹⁶⁵

Sunday morning, 31 May 1846 (Book 22:18):

O source of life! I thirst for relief to be provided by you! God knows how my soul and body yearns in a land that is burning, dry and dull due to drought.¹⁶⁶

Monday the 25th of May 1846 (Book: 21:48):

My bitter cup, from which I have been drinking for two days now, was again filled by the Lord. It has had such an influence on my oppressed soul that I sat

¹⁶⁴ *Dat was een geestelik gezicht, zo keerde ik terug in een straat die met jongen boorden beplant was. Het was als of al of ik my toen buiten den stad bevond op een weg die naar beneden leid, en ontmoet den Heer gehuld in een mantel maar had geen hoed op het hoofd. Zyn hoofd en mantel was besproeid met dauw. Hy was opkomende uit zynen grenaten-hof schoon en wakker als het morchenrood, vluch en vaardig in zynen gang. Hy zag my aan en was verblyd my op dien weg te vinden. Een onbelemmerden vreugd schitterde op zyn gezicht en doorboorde met zyne bekoorlike ogen en zo vol van genade en liefde de fundamente van myn ziel (My translation).*

¹⁶⁵ *Heere ik zal niet opbouden tot uw te roepen bij dagen en bij nachten, tot gij mijn helpt tot uwe moet ik gaan? Waar zal ik mijne nooden en bekommer nissen uit storten? Is ere en andere plaats dan aan Jezus voeten?” (My translation).*

¹⁶⁶ *O levensbron! Ik dorst naar u wilt laafnis zenden! God weet het hoe mijn ziel en lichaam heigd in een land dat dor en mat van droogte brandt (My translation).*

crying loudly on my bed, yes weeping, as if a dear family member had died and was being carried out of the house.¹⁶⁷

The bitter cup she refers to is a reference to her husband's addiction to alcohol and the social stigma it elicited (De Jongh, 1977:189). At the age of 44 Susanna wrote the following after a dispute with a neighbour who disapproved of her pietistic demeanour (Book 1:38):

But, oh! Alas! I am guilty before the Lord, unclean and completely disposable like an old and filthy garment.¹⁶⁸

On Sunday morning, 31 May 1846, Susanna wrote the following (Book 22: 20-21):

Is it not taught that the Lord punishes his favourite children? But why then, do I not improve? Am I beyond instruction, and does my Father beat me in vain? It is taught and recognised though that the rod of the Lord is covered in healing ointment. My wounds bleed and produce nothing but a stench. I bend over and stoop. But are my bending and stooping caused by the love of God? Or is it just because I do not know what else to do? Why am I so distressed, bowed down, why do I weep, why am I not happy in my oppression?¹⁶⁹

The following entry in her diary, on July 1847, demonstrates Susanna's agitated attempt at seeking absolution for her shameful person (Book 32:42):

I cannot say that I am distressed due to my present situation, no; I know that it is caused by continuous attacks of evil. But I have been feeling timid and confused sporadically, as if my healthy mind and strength in belief have come to a halt. As a result, I cannot get a clear vision of Christ, and in my confusion, I am filled with a fear of death.¹⁷⁰

In an entry on 12 September 1849 Susanna reflects on her 'wasted' life (Book 41: 33):

¹⁶⁷ *Mijn bittere beker was weder door de toelating des Heeren voor mij in geschonken en heb er nu twee dagen uitgedronken had zoveel vermogen op mijn benaauwden geest dat ik gistere zoo luid op mijn bed zat te weenen, ja schreide, als of ere en dierbaren bloedverwant het huis dood wierdt uitgedragen* (My translation).

¹⁶⁸ *Maar ach! ijlaas! schuldig voordien Heere onrein en gansch wegwerpelijk als een verouderd bemorst kleed* (My translation).

¹⁶⁹ *Wordt er niet geleerd dat het des Heeren liefste kinderen zijn die door Hem het meest gekastijd wordt? Maar waarom wordt ik dan niet beeter? Ben ik dan een onleerzame En slat mijn vader mij te vergeeft Daar er toch erkend en beleeden wordt dat de roede des Heeren met breuken beelende Zalve bestreken is. Mijn wonden bloed en brengt toch niets dan stank te voorschijn. Ik buig en buk. Maar is dat buigen en bukken wel uit de oorspronkelijke liefde Gods? Of is het net maar omdat ik niet anders kan waarom ben ik zoo bedroef zoo terneder gebogen waarom ween ik zoo waarom ben ik niet vrolijk in de verdrukking* (My translation).

¹⁷⁰ *Ik kan niet zeggen dat ik in deze toestand benaauwd ben, neen, ik weet dat het voort vloed uit de gedurende aan vallen van den boezen Maar ik ben bij korte poozen zeer verlegen en verward en dan of mijn gezond verstand of geloofskrachten stilstaat. Zoo dat ik niet tot een heldere uitzien tot Christus kan komen, En dan in dien verarring, volt de vreeze des doods mij* (My translation).

Although I have hoped for things which I never received, this hope sustained me, until the years raced by one after the other, and were wrecked in futile hope. And now, with the vanity of youth gone, the years of hope gone, and with that the years of struggle that accompanied me, what now?¹⁷¹

On 14 June 1850 Susanna bemoans the fact that her husband has still not been accepted as a minister of the church, is still mocked by the community, and therefore by proxy so is she. The fact that he is laughed at and mocked by children on the street, although she does not mention it, is caused by his alcoholic indulgence and consequent antisocial behaviour (Book 42: 9-10):

...mocked, rebuked, by slanderous texts from the pen of one of the highly placed reverends, and mistreated by his parish, mocked, rebuked, disregarded and abused by some of them. Children mock him on the street while adults laugh at him.¹⁷²

Excluded from meaning-making within the patriarchal Symbolic and alienated within her community, she opted for solitude and sublimatory identification with a mystical form of pietism. The iconic *volksmoeder*, apart from her single agentic attempt at participation in the Symbolic, suffered a miserable existence with the occasional momentary experience of spiritual ecstasy and absolution through identification with patriarchal dogma.

¹⁷¹Hoewel ik ook wel gehoopt heft, op dingen die ik ook nooit verkreegen heft zoo heft dien hoop mij toch geschaard tot dat de jaren den eenen naden anderen was heen gesneld en met de vruchteloze hoop verging. En nu is ijdelbeeden der jonkheid voorbij, de jaren met de hoop ook voorbij de rampen die mij toen vergezelde ook voorbij en wat nu? (My translation).

¹⁷² ... geboond, gesmaad, door schandschriften uit den pen van een van dien Hoog Weleerwaardes, werd hy van zyne gemeenten miszaakt, geboond, gesmaad, miskend en van sommigen mishandeld. Kinderen bespotten hem op straat ternyl de groot menschen er om lachte (My translation).

5.3. Biography of Maria Elizabeth Maritz (born Pistorius) (1899-1972)

My grandmother, Maria Elizabeth Maritz, born on 17 June 1899 (100 years after Susanna Smit's birth and 36 years after her death) was the eldest of five children. She is related to Susanna Smit by marriage to Cornelis Johannes Maritz, who is a descendent of Gerrit Maritz. Maria's mother died when she was 16 years old, and as the eldest child, she became a mother to her siblings until her father remarried a widow with one child of her own.¹⁷³ After her father's second marriage living conditions changed significantly. Maria's stepmother resented her stepchildren. After giving birth to a son during her second marriage, she punished her stepchildren harshly when their father was away from home.¹⁷⁴ Maria married Cornelis Johannes Maritz (born on 1 July 1881) her senior by 18 years.¹⁷⁵ One could conclude that marriage provided Maria with the opportunity to escape from an unhappy childhood home. After their marriage, Maria took care of her youngest sister who had regressed considerably after the death of their mother.¹⁷⁶ Maria and Cornelis had five children, the fourth child (female) died at the age of 12 after contracting polio.

Maria was born shortly before the start of the Anglo-Boer War, while Cornelis fought in the war on the side of the Boers. He served in the Special Forces under the leadership of Captain J. J. Naudé who, according to Grobler (2004:150), operated as a spy on request of General Louis Botha after the occupation of Pretoria in June 1900 under dangerous circumstances.

Maria experienced the impoverishment of Afrikaner rural community after the Anglo-Boer war. She also witnessed the rise of Afrikaner nationalism, which, inter-alia, gained recognition for Afrikaans as an official language in 1924. Maria witnessed white women being granted the right to vote in 1930, the coming into power of the National Party, the rise of apartheid, the Sharpeville massacre of 1960, and South Africa becoming a Republic on 31 May 1961.

Maria Maritz gave birth to, and cared for, five children, was a capable farmer who personally took care of slaughtering animals, was excellent at handling a weapon, and often provided wild fowl for the cooking pot. She also produced pickled fruit and vegetables, jam, dried and canned fruit, as well as butter for family use. After the death of her husband (9 January 1966)

¹⁷³ Maria's father married the widow of Jopie Fourie who was executed for his role in the 1914 Rebellion.

¹⁷⁴ Private conversation between Maria Maritz and her granddaughter, Maria Elizabeth Snyman (The first-born child of Petronella Maritz named after her grandmother).

¹⁷⁵ Cornelis Maritz is a descendant of Susanna Smit's brother, Gerrit Maritz.

¹⁷⁶ Private conversation between Maria Maritz and her granddaughter Maria Elizabeth Snyman.

Maria successfully managed the farm and her home until her death. She supplied a local canning industry with fruit that she grew on her farm, and sold eggs and fresh produce to the local farmer's cooperative. Apart from being excellent at crochet and cooking, Maria was also an outstanding sharpshooter and won many competitions at local shows. Maria died at the age of 72, witnessed by Petronella and her 4 daughters who were visiting her in hospital, leaving behind 5 children and 12 grandchildren.



Figure 7. Maria Maritz, the only person not facing the photographer, is standing on the left next to her father, while her stepmother and stepbrother are seated on chairs. Also included are her younger brother, identical twin sisters and her youngest sister. Family photo: copy of original, E. Snyman 2015.



Figure 8. Maria Elizabeth Maritz. Photo: copy of original, E. Snyman 2015.



Figure 9. Cornelis Johannes Maritz. Photo: copy of original, E. Snyman 2015.

5.4. The 'journal' of Maria Elizabeth Maritz



Figure 10. The journal of Maria Maritz. Photo: M. De Beer 2016.



Figure 11. Cookery course. Photo: M. De Beer 2016.



Figure 12. Pattern for fingerless gloves. Photo: M. De Beer 2016.



Figure 13. Pattern for a man's jersey. Photo: M. De Beer 2016.

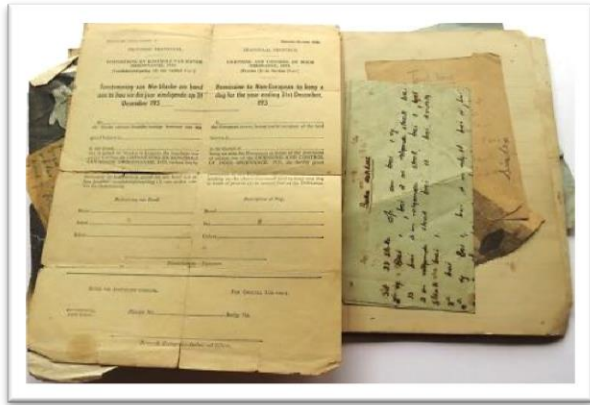


Figure 14. Licence application for a 'non-white' person to own a dog. Photo: M. De Beer 2016.



Figure 15. Reverse of license application. Photo: M. De Beer 2016.



Figure 16. Medication to treat fowl. Photo: M. De Beer 2016.



Figure 17. Funeral notice. Photo: M. De Beer 2016.



Figure 18. Delivery note. Photo: M. De Beer 2016.



Figure 19. Recipes. Photo: M. De Beer 2016.

notes and shopping lists. The book, which I discovered after the death of my mother, is not covered, and her name does not appear anywhere. The journal bears evidence of the complexity of female duties in their roles as mothers and homemakers.

The first page in her recipe book consists of handwritten course notes for an exam dated 1934 (when Maria would have been 34 years old) (Figure 11). The cookery course notes consist of 30 lessons written in a neat and even hand using pen and ink. The course, which seems to be for advanced cooks, consists of instructions for producing specialised sweets such as Turkish delight, toffees, nougat, and crystallised fruit. The last lesson contains useful tips on how to rework unsuccessful attempts into edible sweets, so as to avoid wastage. This indicates that a good homemaker should strive to produce intricate delicacies for the tea table whilst guarding against any possible wastage.

Another item kept within the pages of her recipe book is a delivery note for eggs (Figure 18) made out to C. J. Maritz (her husband) by *De Transvaalsche Koelkamers, Bept* (The Transvaal Refrigeration Company). On the front and back of the invoice is a hastily scribbled recipe (in pencil) in Maria's handwriting, with no indication what the instructions are for. Amongst the pages of the book is a knitting pattern for a man's jersey (Figure 13), hastily torn from the magazine 'Sarie Marais' dated 14 July 1954, under the heading '*U man sal hiervan hou*' (Your husband would like this).¹⁷⁷ An advertisement for a cleaning agent appears next to the pattern. The cleaning agent is hailed as the answer to achieving a perfect radiant home ('*n warm huislikheid deurstraal u woning*).

At the back of the book (Figure 22) just before an entry consisting of a knitting pattern for baby shoes, are two hastily scribbled formulas for treating sick animals; the first regarding treatment for '*n bees wat gif gevreet het* (cattle that have ingested poison) and the second, regarding treatment for *verstoppe galsiekte* (congested gallbladder disease). This indicates that Maria's duties as a homemaker extended to include farming and caring for animals. Amongst the pages of her diary is a separate piece of paper, on which Maria composed the funeral notice of her daughter Marietjie (reminiscent of Susanna's entry on the death of her child), of which I am providing an extract (Figure 17):

It pleased the Lord of Heaven and Earth to take from us on the day of 31st
Aug. 1950, our dearly beloved little girl and sister, Marietjie, at the tender age

¹⁷⁷ According to van Rensburg (2012), the Sarie Marais replaced *Die Boerevrou* (which had been discontinued due to financial reasons) as an Afrikaans woman's magazine, and the cover of the first publication included the iconic image of the Voortrekker woman, found on the cover of *Die Boerevrou*.

of only twelve years, 9 months and fourteen days after a grave suffering of only 12 days due to polio.¹⁷⁸

There are a variety of knitting and crochet patterns for children's clothing amongst the pages, a Christmas card from her daughter Petronella, various recipes in her own hand, as well as an unfamiliar handwriting, and shopping lists for groceries and animal feed (Figures 15, 16, 18 and 19). She used the back of an official license application to own a dog (for a non-white person) to scribble a shopping list for animal feed and to record a recipe (Figures 14 and 15). Maria's recipe book, therefore, served as a 'file' for personal notes and letters, hastily scribbled shopping lists, as well as a journal in which she recorded formulas, recipes and knitting patterns. The recipe book/diary serves as a cultural signifier and concrete reminder of how women construct their lives as mothers, wives, and daughters, whilst providing and caring for their families. Her journal also reflects women's unacknowledged contribution to a patriarchal culture and society.

5.5. Biography of Petronella Isabella Boshoff (born Maritz) (1929-2007)

Petronella Boshoff, born on 5 July 1929, was the second daughter and third child of Cornelis Johannes and Maria Elizabeth Maritz. Petronella married Christiaan Frederik Beyers Boshoff (1926-1989) on 9 August 1952 and gave birth to five children, of which I am the second. Petronella was born in the town of Brits and went to school in Bronkhorstspuit, after which she lived in Pretoria for most of her life. Although working and studying briefly towards a degree after school (via UNISA), Petronella became a homemaker after her marriage and the birth of her first child. Petronella took care of five children, was an outstanding cook, seamstress, and knitter, and took pride in her appearance and dress. She enjoyed English literature and classical music and was an avid bird watcher and gardener who created many garden rockeries and natural rock walls in her garden.

She witnessed the prime of the Afrikaner *volk*, the end of apartheid and the first democratic elections of 1994, and the appointment of the first black president of South Africa, Nelson

¹⁷⁸*Dit het die Here van Hemel en Aarde bebaag om van ons weg te neem op die 31ste Aug. 1950, ons seer Geliefde dogtertjie en sus.sie, Marietjie, In die Jeugdige Ouderdom van 12 jaar 9 maande en 14 dae na 'n smartlike hyding van slegs 12 dae aan Polio (My translation).*

Mandela.¹⁷⁹ Petronella's husband (my father), Beyers Boshoff, was a successful author who published his first story in *Die Jongspan*¹⁸⁰ (The Youngsters) at the age of 14, and subsequently produced many books, radio dramas, and film scripts in Afrikaans. Their marriage ended in divorce on 14 February 1979 after 26 years of matrimony. Although Petronella enjoyed a good relationship with her mother she was much closer to her father, and her most precious possessions consisted of his favourite chair and a certificate (Figure 8) awarded to him on 10 June 1902 for his contribution in the Anglo-Boer War. The certificate was awarded by Captain J. J. Naude, the head of the Special Forces of the Z. A. R. (*Zuid Afrikaanse Republiek*; The South African Republic). Petronella lived the last 30 years of her life alone and had little contact with her children, with the last 10 years spent in a retirement facility in Pretoria where she died at the age of 78 in the company of her twin daughters (of which I am one). Petronella left behind 5 children and 7 grandchildren, one of whom she never met.



Figure 24. Petronella Maritz and Beyers Boshoff on their wedding day. Photo: M. De Beer 2016.

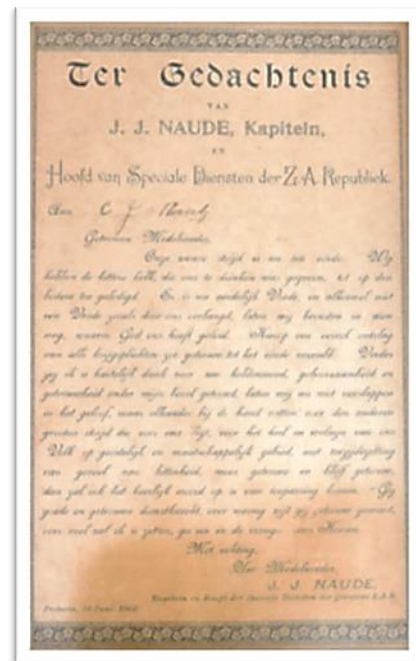


Figure 25. Certificate awarded to C. J. Maritz 1902. Photo: M. De Beer 2016.

¹⁷⁹ As pointed out by Max du Preez (2012: xiv, in Wilkens and Strydom), "By the 1970s, Afrikaners owned a substantial chunk of the South African economy in the form of successful companies, such as Sanlam, Saambou, General Mining, Rembrandt and Nasionale Pers – all dominated by Broeders. The civil service was run and staffed mostly by Afrikaners and the South African Railways was used to provide employment to unskilled and uneducated Afrikaners".

¹⁸⁰ *Die Jongspan* was the first, independent, Afrikaans weekly publication for children, published from 1936 to 1969.

5.6. The 'journal' of Petronella Isabella Boshoff



Figure 26. Petronella's archive/journal. Photo: M. de Beer 2016.

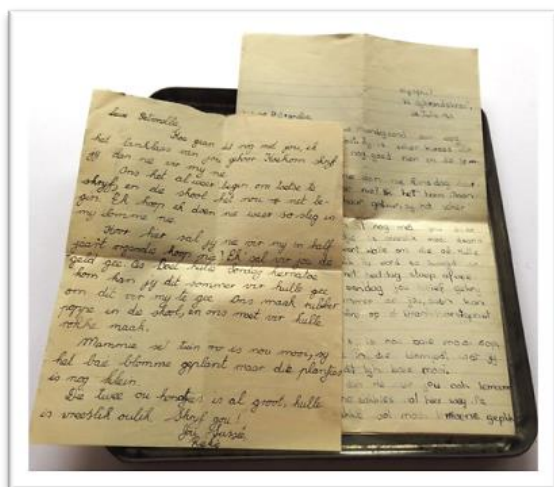


Figure 27. Letters from her sister. Photo: M. De Beer 2016.



Figure 28. Letter from her mother. Photo: M. De Beer 2016.



Figure 29. Photos. Photo: M. De Beer 2016.



Figure 30. Letters from her husband. Photo: M. De Beer 2016.



Figure 31. Congratulations. Photo: M. De Beer 2016.



Figure 32. Overdue account. Photo: M. De Beer 2016.



Figure 33. Invoice. Photo: M. De Beer 2016.



Figure 34. Honeymoon photo: Photo: M. De Beer 2016.

Petronella's 'journal' consists of a cake tin in which she kept letters, photos, receipts, post cards, telegrams, etc. She left behind a selection of recipe books in which she recorded and pasted her favourite recipes, but unlike her mother, she chose to keep personal mementos in a cake tin (Figure 26). The tin contains letters from her mother and sister, as well as postcards and letters from two sisters-in-law and two female friends. Although her children had sent her many letters, there are no letters from any of them in the cake tin. She never shared the existence or contents of the cake tin with anyone, as the lid was secured with parcel tape, and I only discovered it after her death. This indicates that she did not want to share the contents of her 'journal' with anyone while she was alive.

In the tin are two letters from her younger sister Marietjie who died of polio at the age of 12 on 31 August 1950 (Figure 27). One of the letters, dated 22 June 1949, was sent from her parents' farm Klipspruit the year before Marietjie's death. In the letter Marietjie expresses her appreciation for a blouse that Petronella had sewn for her, and for a holiday she spent with her in Pretoria. In a letter (Figure 28), dated 13 June 1949, her mother expresses her disappointment about the fact that her Petronella did not want to accompany her brother on his previous visit to the farm. She complains about all the visitors, as it required her to cook meals, make tea and wash dishes as well as having to clean the house after they had left. Maria implores her daughter to accompany her sister on her next visit, and comments on how heartbroken she was that Petronella did not want to visit her mother on her previous birthday. Figure 32 consists of a statement, dated 20 March 1961, for an overdue doctor's account to the amount of R7.45 (seven rand and fourty five cents). The account is made out to her father C. J. Maritz, and the address is that of Petronella's older sister who also lived in Pretoria. It appears as if Petronella accepted responsibility for the payment of the overdue account.

Figure 31 consists of a congratulatory message from Petronella's husband on the birth of their identical twin daughters. The envelope is addressed to Mrs Boshoff, and supplies a room number, which indicates that she must have received the flowers while in a maternity ward. He congratulates her on the birth of their daughters (of which I am the first-born twin) and jokes about the fact that they would have preferred boys instead. Figure 33 consists of a receipt for a cash sale dated 1 March 1977 when Petronella was 49 years old. The receipt is for a dress form from Perl Modes, which rates itself as the foremost fashion house in Pretoria. The tin also contains numerous old black and white photos of Petronella as a young woman (Figure 29). There are no dates or names on the back of any of the photos which makes it

impossible to recollect where and when they were taken or what the significance of the photos were to her. The only other photos in the tin are of her identical twin daughters, my sister and I.

The tin contains numerous letters from her husband (Figure 30), written to Petronella before and after their divorce, and the funeral notice of my father, Beyers Boshoff, who died on 17 December 1989. The fragmented photo in Figure 34, which cut out the figure of my father, was taken during Petronella's honeymoon and serves, as do all the objects in this journal, as a signifier of a fragmented identity and life. Her reasons for not keeping any letters or postcards from her children, and getting rid of all family photos, except the photos of her twin daughters, are unclear. It is significant that she kept the letters from her husband, before and after their divorce, as well as the letter from her mother and sister (who had died at the age of 12). Unlike her mother, Maria Maritz, whose recipe book/journal was used on a regular basis, Petronella chose to keep significant items hidden away in a cake tin. Her journal reflects how women in patriarchal cultures internalise their marginalisation due to the inability to fully partake in the Symbolic as equal subjects and agents of meaning-making.

5.7. Domesticity and maternal subjectivity

Susanna's diaries, and my grandmother and mother's archives, serve as signifiers of the materiality of 'ordinary' women's lives and demonstrate how women become complicit in their subjugation as a means to access agency within a discourse not of their making. Whilst the cultural and societal norm is masculine and woman are conceptualised according to her maternal function in service to the regulated norm, they remain excluded from principal meaning-making. These women, therefore, could only access the Symbolic, which pre-exists and prescribes participation, by conforming to cultural and societal norms. As Noëlle McAfee (2005:147) argues, the production of meaning and subjectivity never exists outside of histories and "subjects come to be in time, in a socio-symbolic field, in a semiotic public sphere that structures our sentiments, identities, ideals".

My ancestors' journals reflect the complex, and often chaotic, nature of women's lives that seem to be evaluated according to the scrupulous presentation of their orderly homes and immaculately groomed bodies. Their journals serve as a reflection of repetitive, seemingly insignificant and mainly invisible female domestic commitments, nurturing and caregiving.

Moreover, these archives serve as evidence of the under-acknowledged contribution women make as mothers and wives, often at great psychological and economic cost to themselves. Their journals, therefore, signify the fragmented psyche of women who collect and keep the defective evidence of their abject experiences hidden. This exploration is not an attempt at glorifying motherhood, as Susanna and both my mother and grandmother neither received nor provided sufficient mothering during their lives. Susanna constantly attempted to negotiate the absolution of her children's 'souls' which provides evidence that she experienced herself, and therefore her children, as defective.

This re-storying serves to address Oliver's concern that mothers do not realise their own value, as Western culture has yet to learn to recognise it (2004:164). Re-storying of female lives needs to be made by women and for women as their histories/stories as mothers have traditionally been silenced within prescriptive structures of phallogocentric discourse (Helen Cixous in Chakraborty, 2013). Women's histories, as seemingly irrational subjects in service to patriarchy, have been occluded. According to Irigaray (1991:47), women, as reproducers of culture, form the substratum of the Symbolic, and "the whole of our western culture is based upon the murder of the mother". In the following discussions, I will argue, via psychoanalytic theories, how these women achieved sublimation whilst being rendered complicit in their subjugation within a patriarchal Symbolic.

5.7.1. Pietism as sublimation

Susanna Smit's identification with mystical pietism, manifesting as passionate masochistic identification with the suffering of the son-father, provided her with a precarious measure of sublimatory meaning-making, as demonstrated in the following entry in her diary (Book 10: 53-54):

He left to prepare a palace for his bride, and told her that he would return to take her with him, in glory as I want you to be with me, where I am so shall you be. To which the bride answers: Yes! Amen! Lord come, come quickly.¹⁸¹

¹⁸¹ *Hij is bene gegaan, om zijne Bruid eene Paleis te bereiden, en heft haar gezegt ik komt weder en zal u dan tot mij nemen, in Heerlijkheid want ik wil uw ook bij mij hebben, waar ik ben zult gij ook bij mij zijn. Zoo antwoord de Bruid. Ja! Amen! Heere Jezus komt ja komt haastiglijk* (My translation).

From a psychoanalytical perspective, and as proposed by Kristeva (2009:11), mysticism “plunges the ego into the id by means of a sort of sensual autoeroticism that confers a kind of omnipotence on the id: revelation and absence, pleasure and nothingness”.¹⁸² The Freudian interpretation of prohibition, grounded in incest taboo and the ‘murder of the father’ (Moses and Monotheism 1939, Totem and Taboo 1913), forms the basis of social bonds (Father’s law). Transgression of these boundaries leads to punishment and guilt.¹⁸³ The narrative of the ‘beaten-to-death son-father’, which forms the core of monotheistic Christian religion, banishes the maternal body to identification with transgression of boundaries and enables a masochistic sublimatory identification with the suffering of the tortured son-father (Kristeva, 2009:57).¹⁸⁴ The father is humanised and feminised “by his suffering, and it is precisely in this that he becomes for me both a double (replica of my weakness, guilt, mortality...) and my ideal (I am united with him in the promise of eternity, of salvation)” (Kristeva. 2009:58). Kristeva (200:58) suggests that:

It follows that, for the unconscious, these father/son/daughter reunions *put the incest prohibition on hold* in and through the suffering of the two loving-and-punished protagonists, so that their common *suffering* is necessarily experienced as a wedding. The sexualized pain, under “the whip of faith” in the identification with the beaten-to-death father, becomes the paradise of masochism.

This identification with the ‘son-father suffering’ appeases guilt and enables suffering to become ‘divine suffering’. Identification with ‘complicit’ suffering enables the suspension of guilt, and facilitates a masochistic form of sublimation. Obsessive identification with mystical Christendom, followed by self-abatement, turns the abjection of self “into the ultimate proof of humility before God” (Kristeva, 1982:5). As pointed out by Oliver

¹⁸² The id forms part of Freud’s tripartite structure of the psyche. The id represents the unconscious, instincts and drives (death drive and pleasure principle), whereas the ego mediates between the id and the Symbolic. The super-ego, which represents the conformation to societal norms and values, consists of an ideal self and conscience, serving as a tyrannical, introjected voice that berates and shames the ego into submission. From a Freudian perspective, the ego has to constantly negotiate its perception of reality according to the influence of the id and the super-ego. The ego has to constantly mediate between intrusions of desire from the id (unconscious), in order to function within a society, and the critical super-ego, which berates and denounces the ego, resulting in guilt and anxiety (Thurschwell, 2000).

¹⁸³ “Christianity maintains the inescapable ideal, on the one hand, and on the other, it also resexualizes the ideal father-son, whose happy suffering links me to his passion. I identify with Him (the Son-Father) beaten to death” (Kristeva 2008: 4).

¹⁸⁴ According to Irigaray (1991:36), “When Freud describes and theorizes, notably in *Totem and Taboo*, the murder of the father as founding the primal horde, he forgets a more archaic murder, that of the mother, necessitated by the establishment of a certain order in the polis”.

(1993:55), the abject is “a threatening otherness that Christianity calls sin”. Kristeva (cited in Oliver 1997:232) argues, “[t]here is nothing like the abjection of self to show that all abjection is in fact recognition of the *want* on which any being, meaning, language, or desire is founded”. Abjection, love and loss are part of the process of separation from the mother, which is an “exposure to and struggle with alterity”, as a conditioning of “the subject’s access to socio-symbolic meaning” (Keltner 2011:38). The maternal abject manifests as an eternal anxiety caused by the need to separate oneself from the threatening yet familiar, while at the same time yearning for the plenitude once experienced. In order to enter and maintain participation in the patriarchal/masculine Symbolic, it is necessary to control the threatening and permeable borders of our unconscious attachment with our first home, and to ceaselessly conquer the fear of annihilation. Under threat is a tenuous hold on meaning and the disruption of borders that distinguishes a subject from itself and another.

Susanna, as a woman and marginalised member of society, therefore, interiorised her abjected self and punishing superego resulting in a form of masochistic repetition compulsion that manifested in relentless confessions of inferiority and sin, with subsequent momentary illusory absolution and salvation.¹⁸⁵ Her punishing superego manifested as a punitive omnipresent God who had to be obeyed. She passionately identified with her subjection as a means to attain a measure of agency, albeit distorted, through a sublimatory identification with mystical pietism and abjection of the self. According to Oliver (2004:112), feelings of shame within a depressive identity “are related to one’s sense as a subject and agent rather than to one’s actions”. Consumed by feelings of shame and guilt, Susanna denigrated herself as one who is unworthy of God’s love and constantly begged for forgiveness.

Oliver (2004:90) proposes that self-beratement and social melancholy are the result of internalised shame caused by the loss of a ‘loveable self’. Without social acceptance and adequate sublimatory participation in the Symbolic, marginalised members of society are unable to transfer affects into signification and they remain excluded from the dominant societal and cultural values (Oliver, 2004:92). Oliver (2004: 94) argues that marginalised subjects ironically seek recognition from “the very culture that rejects them as inferior”. In this sense they come to bear the burdens and shame for their culture (that projects unwanted affects onto the oppressed) and interiorise an abjected self in the form of a punishing superego (Oliver, 2004: 93).

¹⁸⁵ Repetition compulsion in Freudian terms, grounded in the death drive, is the apparent human need to identify with and endlessly recreate traumatic experiences, as a method to work through original trauma.

Judith Butler (1997) explains that subjection takes advantage of the desire for existence, and that it becomes part of the process of becoming a subject, which is always reliant on the dominant discourse. Butler (1997:6) proposes that the self-same power, to which one is subjected, becomes internalised as a ‘bad conscience’ resulting in self-beratement and mortification, as evident in Susanna’s diary entries.¹⁸⁶ The dominant ideology to which Susanna was subjected was rooted in the authority of the patriarch and sanctioned by God.

5.7.2. The mother-daughter relationship.

So what is a mother? Someone who makes the stereotypical gestures she is told to make, who has no personal language and who has no identity. But how, as daughters, can we have a personal relationship with or construct a personal identity in relation to someone who is no more than a function? (Irigaray, 1991:50).

Erasure of maternal genealogies concomitantly erases maternal debt and excludes women from partaking in the Symbolic, except as reproducers of the patriarchal cultural order. The un-symbolised mother-daughter relationship causes mothers and daughters to become captives of the maternal function. Man has claimed creativity and sublimation and uses women to maintain and perpetuate this patriarchal myth, robbing women of their creative power and access to sublimation. Without adequate access to sublimation or a philosophy of female subjectivity, and whilst the abjected maternal remains located within the death drive and sacrifice, it remains virtually impossible for mothers to provide sufficient nurturing to their daughters.

Irigaray (1993:131) criticises the historical role of women, as daughters of fathers, to be given away in marriage to another man in order to become his wife, and subsequently for the wife to become “a mother in the genealogy of her husband”. This relegates the mother-daughter relationship to a subordinate position and inhibits the transmission of culture and genealogy from mother to daughter. Susanna Smit and her mother did not have a fulfilling relationship, as her mother did not enjoy full subjectivity or agency within a culture and society, which prevented her from protecting or valuing her daughter adequately. As

¹⁸⁶ Butler (1997:2) argues that: “if following Foucault, we understand power as forming the subject as well, as providing the very condition of its existence and the trajectory of its desire, then power is not simply what we oppose but also, in a strange sense, what we depend on for our existence and what we harbour and preserve in the beings that we are”.

marginalised members of a patriarchal cultural Symbolic, Maria Maritz and Petronella Boshoff did not enjoy adequate sublimatory participation within the Symbolic, which ultimately affected their relationships with their daughters. Whitford (in Irigaray 1991:73-74) comments on Irigaray's remark on unacknowledged maternal debt and its impact on the relationship between mothers and daughters as follows:

Since women have no language (langage) or words (parole) of their own, which would give symbolic representation to relations between mother and daughters, relations between them 'take place in a deadly immediacy'...In psychoanalytic language, women do not become separate or have an autonomous identity, they remain merged with the mother. As a result, most women are dependent; they live in dereliction (abandonment) and their greatest terror is that of being abandoned, since they have no self-identity which would provide them with their own 'home'.

Mothers train their daughters in the domestic skills of providing and nurturing. Female children are given dolls, as transitional objects, with which they practice performance of duties as caregivers and sex objects in order to become the ultimate transitional objects (dolls) for adult men. Whitford (in Irigaray, 1991:161) states that, as long as "women are confined to the family, their access to the universal is derivative, via the husband or son, rather than direct" and they remain reproducers of the social order.¹⁸⁷ The foreclosure of the maternal body and the subsequent valorisation of the masculine role favour the son, rendering the 'castrated' daughter as passive and inferior to the masculine. The daughter, who has to identify with the devalued cultural maternal role, is unable to separate from the abject maternal body, and "drags this abjection with her like a festering wound at the core of her psyche" (Oliver, 2004:110). Girls are unable to form a positive identification with their mothers whilst the maternal body remains abjected in patriarchal society.¹⁸⁸ According to Kristeva (1992b:28-30), separation from the maternal body is a different experience for the female infant, as she identifies with the body of the mother. Abjection of the maternal body, therefore, means she has to abject her own body as well. Having to maintain identification

¹⁸⁷ Whitford (in Irigaray, 1991:159) suggests that according to Irigaray, "woman is used by the male imaginary to deflect or mediate the death drives of *men*", and they are therefore "imprisoned, are buried alive in culture", sacrificed to safeguard the patriarchal symbolic.

¹⁸⁸ Whitford (1991:87) comments on Irigaray's theory of maternal genealogy as follows: "There is no genealogy on the side of women; the general differences are blurred; the man takes the woman as *substitute* for his mother while the woman simply takes her mother's place. So that women (in the symbolic) are in a kind of continuous present; they *represent* the death drives, but cannot sublimate their own, because their own relationship to the passing of generations is unsymbolized".

with the abjected female body, whilst also needing to separate from the maternal body, results in women having to “carry around the ‘corpse’ of their mother’s bodies locked in the crypt of their psyches”, manifesting as melancholia (Kristeva, 1992b: 27-30).¹⁸⁹

5.7.3. Maternal subjectivity as sublimation.

The mother stands for the victim in ourselves, the unfree woman, the martyr.
Our personalities seem dangerously to blur and overlap with our mothers, and,
in a desperate attempt to know where mother ends and daughter begins, we
perform radical surgery (Adrienne Rich in Murdoch, 1990:13).

The maternal body has historically been defined according to its lack of masculine qualities, and, therefore, incorporated within masculinist discourse as a patriarchal signifier, while at the same time being excluded from equal access to signification. This has caused women to experience their bodies according to its reproductive function, and therefore as abject, excluded from a meaning-making of their choice within the societal and cultural Symbolic. From a psychoanalytical perspective the maternal role and the maternal body are credited with extra-ordinary power in the contribution of meaning and meaninglessness in the life and death of the subject. A Freudian and Lacanian Oedipal interpretation of the desire for the mother, which has to be overcome and replaced by the Law of the Father in order to gain subjectivity, favours the patriarchy. Ettinger (2006:173,3) comments on maternal subjectivity as follows:

[t]he mother is either an attractive object of father son rivalry or a nursing object: either a copulating animal or a nourishing animal. In either of these roles a woman can also reappear as a Muse, the source of inspiration. But between copulating and nursing it seems that there is a void.

As demonstrated in the previous chapters, Afrikaner women conformed to dominant cultural values that required them to serve as mothers to families and the nation. Afrikaner women of the Anglo-Boer War era belonged to a class that represented inferiority, ignorance and

¹⁸⁹ In accordance with Freud, this constitutes a “problematic mourning,” an unresolved psychic state akin to depression and generated by unresolved ambivalent feelings towards that, which is mourned (Kristeva, 1992b:28-30).

primitivism.¹⁹⁰ Abjection of the maternal body, and its relation to class and access to agency, is also evident in early middle-class Afrikaner woman's acceptance of her *volksmoeder* role during the first half of the twentieth century. Access to sublimatory participation in society is a psychic necessity, even within a Symbolic not of one's own making. Afrikaner women achieved agency and sublimation through identification with the maternal role as a substitute for Phallic power. The female body, therefore, serves as a signifier of reproduction that becomes women's primary access to sublimation and meaning-making. It is therefore not surprising, as stated by Lisa Baraitser (2009:5),

...that our dealings with the maternal may attempt to keep her at bay by rendering her as either a function or object in the developing inner world of the child, a metaphorical figure used to signify particular representational modes, or an individual who engages in a set of socially controlled practices and ideologically driven fluxes of power, thereby leaving her struggling to consolidate anything that may be thought of as agency, desire or choice.

Oliver (2004:111) proposes that women identify with their children as a substitute for Phallic power. The child becomes a substitute for access to symbols and words when the mother 'gives up' on the patriarchal Symbolic and turns to her child, who she paradoxically has to 'sacrifice' to the Symbolic (Oliver, 2004:111). This results in a wounded narcissistic identification, for both mother and child, when the child identifies with the depressed mother.¹⁹¹ The first signifier (the maternal body) remains behind and forms part of the 'Real', and is relegated to predestined sublimatory failure, the unrepresentable Lacanian void and associated with the Freudian death drive manifesting as repetition compulsion, melancholia and depression.

5.7.4. Female domesticity

¹⁹⁰ Van Heyningen (2013:188) quotes a report by Kendall Franks on Afrikaner women in concentration camps during the South African war, in which he displays British Victorian prejudice: "The high death rate among the children, I would like to emphasise again, is in no way due to want of care or dereliction of duty on the part of those responsible for the camp. It is in my opinion, due to the people themselves; to their dirty habits both as regards their own personal cleanliness and the cleanliness of their children and their surroundings; to their prejudices; their ignorance; and their distrust of others, even their own nationality, when their advice runs counter to their own preconceived and antiquated ideas".

¹⁹¹ Oliver (2004:111) proposes that the narcissistic wound "is related to the shame that accompanies depression, a shame aimed at the very core of the self". Furthermore, the identification with maternal depression could lead to masochism in women and sadism in men when depression results in a vicious cycle that is repeated in the next generation (Oliver, 2004:112).

Women, as keepers of physical homes, sacrifice themselves in order to provide for others. They serve as guardians of place and space, as representation of the original place of dwelling within the body of the mother, to whom/which men return to for comfort and nurturance.¹⁹² According to Irigaray (1991:170), man robs woman of her spatiality and in exchange, “though it never is one, he buys her a house, shuts her up in it, and places limits on her that are the counterpart of the place without limits where he unwittingly leaves her”. In Figure 35 below, Maria Maritz is seated in front of her stove, in the kitchen where she spent most of her time, in her small two bedroomed house built after the death of her husband. All her cooking and baking were done in this wood fired stove which also provided heat in the cold winters, and in which she sheltered new-born chicks in the warming drawer. The front rooms/sitting rooms (*voorkamers*) in my mother and grandmother’s houses were rarely utilised, as the front rooms were pristine spaces reserved for entertaining family, guests, and for visits by male representatives of the church. In contrast, their kitchens (and journals) reflect the chaotic complexity of their lives.



Figure 35. Maria Maritz in her kitchen. Photo: Author's collection.

Sherry Turkle (2007: 321) comments on the symbolic significance of spatial arrangements, via the practices of the archivist Jeffrey Mifflin, as follows:

¹⁹² According to Irigaray (1991:169), “[t]he mother woman remains the *place separated from its ‘own’ place*, a place deprived of a place of its own”.

As a curator, Miffen compares the untidy, chaotic spaces in museum back rooms and the meticulous presentations in the front rooms where all is tidy and ordered. The contrast reveals something too often hidden: we tend to present “front room” knowledge as true. But its certainties are constructed. We make up a clean story to mask our anxieties about the chaotic state of the little we know. Chaos compels its opposite: “the orderly presentation of supposed facts” to which Miffin feels disconnected...Yet it is the contrast between the front and back rooms that leads Miffin to a new appreciation of the complexity of knowledge.

Evident in both Maria and Petronella’s ‘journals’, is that they endeavoured to adhere to societal requirements of being good homemakers and nurturers. In addition to their roles as mothers, they attempted to meet societal requirements of being ‘good wives’ to their husbands. Cloete (1992:47) argues that the contemporary status of Afrikaner women is a product of “two culturally separate yet collusionary ‘confinements’: *volkskap* and the mass media”, with confinement meaning “the way one allows a limitation to be placed upon oneself, whether wittingly or unwittingly”. She views the second confinement of Afrikaner women, “the tyranny of looking good”, to be more deceptive and arguably self-imposed, as it entails the “relentless discipline against the body” (Cloete, 1992:54).¹⁹³ Women, who have historically been alienated from their bodies, remain trapped within an estranged normative subject position that is still dictated by the masculine cultural Symbolic. In a comparative analysis of the construction of femininity, in the popular Afrikaans magazine *Die Huisgenoot* (early 1950’s to early 2000), Louise and Stella Viljoen (200:94) conclude that there has been a shift away from cultural distinctions towards a more globalised and homogenous identity.¹⁹⁴ An obsessive identification with self-representation in the construction of femininity seems to indicate a shift from a pursuit of the perfection of the soul, to a perfection of the body (Herbst, 2005:18).

¹⁹³ Cloete (1992:54) views the images of women that are continuously projected, to command a “continual self-surveillance – so much so that a kind of “male connoisseur resides within the consciousness of most women”. In women there is “a sense of surveillance in ways that men do not survey themselves”.

¹⁹⁴ They also find that the previous, family-orientated slant of the magazine has changed, in order to target female readers (Viljoen & Viljoen, 2005:94): “If one compares the way in which articles in the 2003 issue constructs femininity with that of the 1953 issue, some aspects seem to have changed, whereas others have remained the same. Although the 2003 issue shows that women have moved from the domain of the private assigned to them in 1953 and now take their place in the public domain by being journalists, policewomen, restaurant owners, actresses and singers, they are still largely portrayed in the role of mother, primary caretaker and nurturer of children (Amor Vittone with the ultrasound image of her unborn baby, the police woman with her own children and the baby she wants to adopt, and the mother who helps her child with the speed-reading course)”.

This raises the question whether women are truly ‘enthusiastic participants’ in patriarchal agendas by choice while the female, and more specifically the maternal body, serves as signifier for a phallogentric Symbolic. Underlying the myth of the enthusiastic and willing female participant is the notion of compromised access to sublimation according to restricted subject positions available to women. Women’s experience of their bodies remains fragmented, and whilst the monopoly of origin and knowledge remains with men, they will continue to be alienated from a feminine Imaginary or Divinity that relates to their needs and genre. In the next and conclusive chapter, I present poetry and images of my art practice, which constitute the principal method for this re-storying.

Chapter 6

6. A visual and poetic re-storying

The first 4 chapters of this dissertation provide a historical background as well as context, and include a discussion of the psychoanalytical theories employed for the re-storying of three Afrikaner women's lived experiences. In the first chapters I argue that subjectivity for Afrikaner women has been situated in their assigned roles as mothers and *volksmoeders*. Chapter 5 provides an exploration of the journals of three of my female ancestors, and explains the theories I applied for reviewing their access to sublimation within their respective cultural and historical eras. In this final chapter, I redress their compromised access to sublimation, via my artwork and poetry, in order to recount their experiences as female members of a patriarchal society and culture. I launch the exploration with an explanation of the theoretical approaches that underpin the visual re-storying, followed by a discussion which includes my choice of materials and techniques, as well as images of my artwork. In conclusion, I provide a video presentation which, with my artwork, serve as the principal method for re-storying the 'voices' of the protagonists. The objective of the video presentation is to use art and poetry as a method to disrupt the restrictive control of logocentric signification within the Symbolic. This forms part of an effort to overcome a patriarchal phallogocentric construct of subjectivity. My use of poetry and art also serves as an explorative contribution towards the development of a feminine Imaginary.

My use of poetry relates to Hélène Cixous's concept of *l'écriture féminine*, which challenges Lacan's claim that the Phallus constitutes the principal (transcendental) signifier. Feminist theorists contend that the Phallus, as the source and fulcrum of the masculine Symbolic and its logocentric monopoly on language, has dominated signification and sublimation leaving women on the periphery of meaning-making. Cixous (1976:879) proposes that "the entire history of writing has been confounded with the history of reason" in keeping with a logocentric tradition of "self-admiring, self-stimulating, self-congratulatory phallogocentrism". She advocates the notion of 'feminine' writing, as a return to the female body and its drives, and more specifically the maternal body, in order to challenge Freudian and Lacanian interpretations of women as 'lack', and of the association of the maternal body with the Real

(Cixous, 1997).¹⁹⁵ My poetry, which draws on the journals of three women, hints at personal experiences (including my own) which I obtained from each woman's story. The poems consist of 'found' lines which I sourced from their respective archives and arranged in the format of a pantoum poem (as discussed previously). My artwork, as metaphorical interpretations of female subjectivity, employs Kristeva's (1985, 1997) concept of mimesis in an attempt to disrupt essentialist phallogocentric interpretations and misrepresentations of maternal subjectivity within a Western Symbolic. My aim is to demonstrate the significance of affects and drives (via the maternal body) within the Symbolic, by using my artwork and poetry to create a narrative of female experiences of sublimation, subjection and abjection. As argued in the preceding chapters, Afrikaner women have had to submit to a phallogocentric Symbolic in order to attain a measure of subjectivity and sublimation. Poetry and art, as poetic language linked to the semiotic, provide a method with which to acknowledge the significance of a feminine contribution to the Symbolic, and at the same time, to challenge masculinist domination of signification.

6.1. Mimesis (semiotic chora)

Kristeva's (1985, 1997) concept of mimesis¹⁹⁶ and the semiotic *chora* (poetic language),¹⁹⁷ which is contingent on materiality and the impact of bodily drives on signification, provides a

¹⁹⁵ According to Chakraborty (2013, 2897) *Écriture féminine* or feminine writing as defined by Cixous is "about the representation of the feminine body as a path towards thought, a thought that would question the foundations of male-centric thinking, that which would "unsilence" the female voice enabling them to manifest their unconscious hidden self or "the Other" in androcentric language".

¹⁹⁶ Mimesis constitutes a transgression of boundaries (the thetic) which facilitates verisimilitude and "refers to an object that can be constructed through the semiotic network but is nevertheless posited in the symbolic" (Kristeva, 2002:47). Kristeva (1997:47) explains that mimesis is "a transgression of the thetic when truth is no longer a reference to an object that is identifiable outside of language; it refers instead to an object that can be constructed through the semiotic network but is nevertheless posited in the symbolic and is, from then on, always verisimilar". Furthermore, "[m]imesis does not actually call into question the unicity of the thetic; indeed it could not, since mimetic discourse takes on the structure of language and through narrative sentences, posits a signified and signifying object" (Kristeva, 1997:47).

¹⁹⁷ The semiotic *chora*, which is unfathomable, is associated with the materiality of the maternal body experienced as bodily processes (drives and their articulations), the rhythm of her movements, voice and heartbeat, which precedes yet, has an impact on language and signification (Kristeva, 1997:35-39). According to Kristeva (in Keltner, 2011:29), the concept of the semiotic *chora*, (which she borrows from Plato), is a "non-expressive totality of the movement" via the influence of drives, which is not static but "as full of movement as it is regulated". Kristeva (1997:35) proposes that "discourse – all discourse – moves with and against the *chora* in the sense that it simultaneously depends upon and refuses it". She states that the semiotic *chora* "[a]lthough originally a precondition of the symbolic" functions "within signifying practices as the result of a transgression of the symbolic" (Kristeva, 1997:54). According to Keltner (2011:30), the semiotic *chora* "is ordered by the symbolic, but in mediated form. This mediated form that organizes the semiotic *chora* is the work of the maternal body. The maternal body mediates the symbolic order and organizes the semiotic *chora* as the "place" where the subject will become. The semiotic *chora* thus points

method with which to acknowledge female ‘voices’ and to resist the erasure of the maternal body in the Symbolic. The semiotic is a primary mediating process (pre-Oedipal) made possible by heterogeneous identification with the maternal body prior to the separation and differentiation needed to gain entrance to the Symbolic (Kristeva 1985, 1997). It has subversive qualities which enables the opportunity to challenge masculinist domination of the Symbolic. Entrance to and participation in the Symbolic, and therefore subjectivity, has been dictated by the Lacanian Phallus as the primary and transcendental signifier that prescribes meaning to objects and experiences. Since sublimation of drives and affects can only occur by submitting to the Symbolic and its signifying practices women have had to conform to patriarchal cultural and societal norms. As a result the maternal body has been associated with non-being, un-representability and the Real. However, Kristeva (1997) insists that mimesis and its pre-Oedipal association with the maternal body destabilises Phallic signification, and facilitates recognition of the influence of drives, and the Symbolic’s fundamental and denied indebtedness to the maternal body. According to Kristeva (1997:37), as “[d]rives involve pre-Oedipal semiotic functions and discharges that connect and orient the body of the mother”, it, therefore, indicates that the mother’s body mediates Symbolic law and organises social relations, thereby becoming the ordering principle of the semiotic *chora*.¹⁹⁸

The semiotic, to be brief, is “the affective, material dimension of language that contributes meaning, but does not signify in the same way as signs”, and relates to the Real and Imaginary (Keltner, 2011:19). In contrast, the Symbolic is “any social, historical sign system of meaning constitutive of a community of speakers” (Keltner, 2011:19). Tension between the semiotic and Symbolic facilitates meaning-making (sublimation) as a semiotic discharge of energy in the Symbolic, or alternatively, by providing Symbolic form and meaning to the semiotic (Keltner, 2011:19).¹⁹⁹ The semiotic and Symbolic both form part of a heterogeneous process of signification and the subject is therefore always both semiotic and Symbolic (Keltner, 2011:22-23). The semiotic, although pre-existing entrance to the Symbolic and signification (which occurs, according to Lacan, via symbolic castration and the mirror

to the most archaic splittings that precondition the advent of a subject in meaningful relationships with objects and others”.

¹⁹⁸ Kristeva (1997:37) points out that drives are “pre-Oedipal semiotic functions and energy discharges that connect and orientate the body to the mother”, and emphasizes that drives “are always already ambiguous, simultaneously assimilating and destructive”.

¹⁹⁹ According to Keltner (2011:29), “[t]he *chora* both receives and refuses the form and meaning given to it. In its refusals, the semiotic breaks with received meanings”. McAfee (2009:18) identifies Kristeva’s concept of the *chora* to be “extremely hazy: the *chora* is often translated as womb or receptacle, but Kristeva doesn’t seem to mean that it is just a space; she says it is an articulation, a rhythm, but one that precedes language”.

phase), can only be expressed through its relationship with the Symbolic (heterogeneity).²⁰⁰ The semiotic, which manifests as mimesis in art, music, poetry and dance, facilitates the manifestation of affects repressed by signification in a Symbolic governed by masculinist discourse and rules.²⁰¹ The archaic semiotic *chora* manifests at the junction of affect, meaning-making and signification.

The break between the semiotic and signifying practices of the Symbolic, which facilitates enunciation, ensues via the *thetic*.²⁰² The *thetic* is the threshold and permeable border between the semiotic and Symbolic and, therefore, between subjectivity and socio-symbolic meaning (signifier/signified) (Kristeva, 1997:39-43). The semiotic constitutes rupture in and remodelling of the Symbolic and its signifying practises, thereby raising the semiotic to signification via the influence of drives (rhythm and stasis) (Kristeva, 1997).²⁰³ According to Toril Moi (1986:13), the semiotic, which is partially repressed on entry into the Symbolic, is “perceived as a pulsional *pressure* on or within symbolic language: as contradictions, meaninglessness, disruption, silences and absences”. Stacey Keltner (2011:22) explains that while the semiotic is always revealed in meaning it withdraws from it at the same time. Meaning, therefore, is never fixed and subjectivity is always experienced as both semiotic and Symbolic. As the Symbolic is always influenced by the historical and phenomenal world and informed by the semiotic, subjectivity is a dynamic process which is constantly negotiated within the tension between the semiotic and Symbolic as part of meaning-making and signification.

Moi (1986:12) insists that, it is imperative to remember that the interaction between the Symbolic and semiotic, according to a Kristevan interpretation, should be understood as a heterogeneous process which indicates that they do not function as separate static entities. Subjectivity is therefore never fixed but always ‘in-process’ (unstable/fractured) as it finds

²⁰⁰ According to Kristeva (in Moi, 1986:31), the semiotic as metalanguage, is a language that speaks about language.

²⁰¹ Acceptance of the linguistic restraints of the Symbolic forces the child to surrender its connection with the mother and therefore a pre-Oedipal relation to energy discharges.

²⁰² Moi (1986:13) interprets the *thetic* as the splitting of the semiotic *chora* which subsequently enables “the subject to attribute differences and thus signification to what was the ceaseless heterogeneity of the *chora*”. The *thetic* lies between the semiotic, the “mobile patterning of instinctual drives within the infant prior to the acquisition of language proper” and the Symbolic, the “domain of articulate language, discriminating between subjects and objects, signifiers and signifieds” (Cook, 2004:437). The *thetic*, therefore, forms the “moment in the acquisition of language when the speaking subject emerges as a distinct but unstable entity” (Cook, 2004:437). According to Kristeva (in Moi, 1986:98-99), “[a]ll enunciation, whether of a word or a sentence, is *thetic*”, and forms “the ‘deepest structure’ of the possibility of enunciation, in other words, of signification and proposition”.

²⁰³ According to Keltner (2011:22), although the semiotic is always revealed in meaning it withdraws from it at the same time. Meaning, therefore, is never fixed and subjectivity is always experienced as both semiotic and Symbolic (Keltner, 2011:22).

itself in the position of conforming and at the same time subverting Symbolic laws due to semiotic influences (Kristeva, 1997:54-56). Kristeva's interpretation of the semiotic offers a non-phallogocentric and disruptive re-visioning of 'subjectivity-as-process'. Recognition of the semiotic influences of the maternal body on signification (the Symbolic) facilitates a multidimensional, flexible, and dynamic process of meaning-making and sublimation.²⁰⁴

Kristeva (1997) identifies a variance in text manifesting as 'genotext' and 'phenotext'. 'Genotext', in opposition to the structural aspect of language, indicates the processes that underpin language via the influence of semiotic drives, whereas 'phenotext' indicates the aspect of language that conforms to the rules of signification in the Symbolic (Kristeva, 1997:57).²⁰⁵ She proposes that the infant experiences early sublimations, prior to the mirror stage, within the semiotic offered by the maternal body, which manifests as laughter and as the designation of place (Kristeva cited in Oliver, 1993:35-36). For the child to enter the mirror stage and the Symbolic he or she already has to have encountered negation through the heterogeneous materiality of the Symbolic that is already operative in the semiotic body and facilitated by the maternal body (Oliver, 1993:42). This would indicate that signification occurs on a "material bodily level" before operation "on the symbolic level" (Oliver, 1993: 43). Kristeva (in Moi, 1986:14) proposes that "the imaginary" of an artwork (genotext) is "really the most unsettling imitation of the mother-child dependence".

My artworks, which I discuss next, function at this level of the thetic, where the Symbolic and the semiotic meet. These works can be decoded in the Symbolic, where the use of materials and mobilisation of symbols and motifs are read as signifiers. However, their visual affect is intended to function more on the level of the semiotic *chora*. Keltner (2011:29) points out that Kristeva identifies all enunciation by definition to be thetic, which could indicate that it is not possible to sufficiently capture and define this semiotic affect in my written dissertation. Unlike the chronological, linear and logical format of the written

²⁰⁴ Sublimation indicates access to the transformation and expression of affect and drives in the societal order, which could be interpreted as creative, psychic, libidinal, or spiritual energy, in order to partake in meaningful action or interaction with others. The transformation of energy/bodily drives/affect is accomplished by participating in the cultural and societal symbolic through the process of signification which could be engaged through practices such as art, music, philosophy, poetry, language or religion. Socially unacceptable impulses, drives, idealisations and affects therefore find an acceptable outlet as sublimation by participation in society according to accepted norms and traditions. Access to sublimation therefore, is directly linked to subjectivity which is dependent on historical, societal and cultural contexts and norms.

²⁰⁵ McAfee (2004:24) interprets Kristeva's definition of genotext as "the motility between the words, the potentially disruptive meaning that is not quite a meaning below the text", whereas phenotext 'is what the syntax and semantics of the text is trying to convey, again, in "plain language"'. This indicates that text "operates on two levels: at the semiotic-genotext level it is a process by which the author organizes or manifests semiotic drives and energy; at the symbolic-phenotext level it is a structured mappable piece of communication" (McAfee, 2004:25).

dissertation, re-storying the lived experiences of my female ancestors, via the exhibition of my artworks and the video presentation, weaves backwards and forwards across many generations, and does not conform to a linear analysis. My artwork and poetry attempt to re-story the fragmented nature of female subjectivity, with the aim being, as Butler states, “not to supply the key, to fill the gap, to fill in the story, but to find the relevant remnants that form the broken landscape that she is. (Butler in Ettinger, 2006: x, xi)”. The juxta-positioning of themes, motifs and objects, during the exhibition of my artworks, and more specifically in the video presentation, is an attempt to re-story the affective dimension of sublimation. The analysis of my work (below), therefore, mainly constitutes a symbolic reading and leaves it up to the reader/viewer to experience the semiotic affects of my artworks and poetry. I discuss my artwork according to specific themes and recurring motifs which manifest across the body of work. The different themes and recurring motifs all serve to subvert and comment, from a psychoanalytical perspective, on maternal abjection, subjugation and sublimation, in contribution to the conceptualisation of a feminine Imaginary.

6.2. Exhibition: ‘Genealogy’

During the process of setting up and displaying my artwork for public viewing at the KZNSA art gallery in Durban, which required the occupation of the whole gallery including wall and floor space, I had the opportunity to reflect on my practice.²⁰⁶ The display of my visual re-storying in a large open gallery space is in direct contrast to the ‘secret’ archives and muted voices of the three protagonists. During the walkabout at the exhibition on 13 May 2017, where I recounted the individual stories of the protagonists, various women suggested the need for a platform that would facilitate the ‘telling’ of their mothers’ and grandmothers’ individual stories.

In order to present the ‘divinities’ series in an appropriate manner on the existing wall space of the gallery, I made wooden boards onto which I tied each small sculpture. This

²⁰⁶ Osmosis Lisa. 2017. *Genealogy exhibition opening*. (Facebook). 2 May 2017.

Available: https://www.facebook.com/pg/KZNSA/photos/?tab=album&album_id=1151110931702487 [2017, 2 June]

transformed them into icons, and prompted my decision to name each divinity, and to place an ‘offering’ (oblation) on a plinth in front of each sculpture. In an attempt to invite the viewers to bring their own interpretations to the artworks, small paper booklets, which contain lines of my poetry, were handed out during the opening event. The viewers were invited to place lines of ‘found’ poetry at works of their choice. Another interesting development occurred when I hung the large thorny porcelain necklaces in front of an extended white wall space. The appropriate application of lighting from multiple angles, and the use of different coloured light bulbs, resulted in a multi-layered display of shadows on the wall space. This created layered shadows, of various colours, which may hint at the passage of time and the notion of multiple perspectives caused by the ‘position’, or perspective, adopted by the viewer.

6.3. Art practice

My artworks mainly consist of small sculptural objects, as well as items (in the form of jewellery) that are wearable or allude to wearability, and serve as metaphorical interpretations of female subjectivity and sublimation. The fact that I am a jewellery designer and qualified goldsmith, who predominantly produces small wearable objects, has a direct impact on the scale and function of the artwork I produce. Jewellery has many functions and could serve as portable wealth, indication of status, personal adornment, a marker of social and cultural identity, or spiritual mediation (Metcalf: 1989:1-10). However, as Bruce Metcalf (1989:4) proposes, for many artists and jewellers “jewellery has become a pure expression of thought and feeling, only loosely connected to the traditional roles of ornament”. This is evident in my artworks which could be regarded as small sculptural objects that allude to wearability. Roberta Bernabei (2011:239) suggests that “there are subtle differences in how contemporary jewellery relates itself to the body, and in the main these derive from the conceptual shift to self-expression”.

I am in agreement with a contemporary jeweller, Bernard Schobinger (in Bernabei, 2011:196), who states that “jewellery does not have to be comfortable” and could serve to convey “messages that are more important than the function of being comfortable or not”. Many of the objects I created, such as the ‘abject objects’ (figures 36-40), ‘klaagliedere (lamentations)’ (figures 41-49) and the ‘thorn necklaces’ (figures 76-89) are not wearable according to conventional notions of jewellery. The messages that these objects convey form part of my re-storying and are of primary importance. Christoph Zellweger (in Bernabei,

2011:227-229) who comes from a “170-year-long family tradition of silversmiths, watchmakers, jewellers and goldsmiths”, proposes that “a piece of jewellery can be functional without being wearable or vice versa”. He likes to test his ideas and to break new ground and does not confine himself to traditional materials (in Bernabei, 2011:228). Zellweger embraces the use of “materials and forms that carry strong cultural and associative references” and, which for him, are “already loaded with information”. Similarly, I employ various materials, subject matter, metaphors and techniques in demonstration of the complex nature of subjectivity. Bernabei (2011:234) argues that contemporary jewellery differs from traditional jewellery “in its treatment of content and how materials and aesthetics are frequently manipulated according to an underlying concept”. Jewellery are objects that facilitate “dialogue between the object, the wearer and observer” and the materials techniques and content of jewellery all contribute to this conversation (Bernabei, 2011:236).

I chose to work mainly in porcelain and porcelain paper clay, and included precious metals and appropriated materials to amplify the metaphorical inferences of the artworks. These materials were chosen according to their intrinsic qualities in contribution to the process of conceptualising a feminine Imaginary. Porcelain is a fragile, yet stable material, typically associated with objects such as dinnerware and tea services used in the domestic environment (women’s domain), as well as small sculptural figurines (fragile decorative objects usually kept in display cabinets). Porcelain, although fragile if handled incorrectly, is known for its durability and aesthetic appeal. Unlike earthenware and stoneware it facilitates the production of delicate objects. Porcelain paper clay is a malleable medium which facilitates sculpting and the addition of components to the original structure, which suited my method of creating sculptural objects, which required multiple stages in the manufacturing process. I utilised the fragile nature of porcelain and embraced ‘accidents’ that occurred, electing to ‘mend’ broken fragments (figures 90, 92, 93, 97, 99 and 102) to accentuate messages of fragility and healing, as I will discuss later. Similarly, Bernhard Schobinger “welcomes unexpected accidents in the making process, believing them to be a ‘big opportunity because new forms are often made by accident’” (Bernabei, 2011:237).

I chose to work in Sterling and fine silver based on the metal’s inherent qualities such as malleability and ductility. This enabled me to practise specialised techniques such as filigree work, crochet, and knitting to create detailed items that employ traditional female crafts, and at the same time to produce articles that convey the required transient qualities. Bernabei (2011:236) proposes that the role of technique in jewellery, although still appreciated, is no

longer regarded as the “common denominator of quality, as perhaps it might once have been”, and has become “a means to an end” and a “servant of content”. The addition of semi-precious stones and beads contribute to notions of adornment and preciousness. The appropriated materials include steel, wood, cotton, sisal, felt, teacups and saucers, as well as skeletal remains of amphibians and insects.

I use various metaphors and symbols and employ different materials and techniques to create objects/artworks that serve to convey messages. Elliot Eisner (2008:9) proposes that “[o]ne of the major weaknesses of the logical positivist movement was a tendency on their part to dismiss poetic and metaphorical language as meaningless utterances”. Eisner (2011:9) suggests that we “know more than what we can tell” and that we “should try telling what we know with anything that will carry the message forward”. The recurring metaphors and symbols in my artworks include dolls (faces, heads, and limbs, or the absence of limbs), thorns, vessels (teacups, saucers, and spoons) and neckpieces (or nooses). This repetition can be interpreted as a manifestation of, in Freudian psychoanalytical terms, repetition compulsion.²⁰⁷ From a psychoanalytical perspective repetition compulsion is the tendency to repeat repressed, and often traumatic, experiences in an effort to ‘work through’ the original trauma as part of sublimation and meaning-making. The reiterative nature of Susanna Smit’s diary entries, which consist of unremitting self-denigrating confessions of personal guilt and sin, with subsequent absolution when she praises the benevolence of God and his son, may be interpreted as her attempt at ‘working through’ repressed trauma. Susanna occasionally returned to previous diary entries, at times many years later, to add additional reflections. The same could possibly be said about my practice, and the repetitive motifs and symbols in my artworks can, therefore, be interpreted as an effort to heal personal anguish as part of my attempt to retro-actively acknowledge the anguish and sorrow observed in my mother, grandmother and female members of my family. The repetition of motifs in the artworks occurred in cycles, and may also indicate the reiterative nature of sublimation as part of meaning-making.

²⁰⁷ Robert Rogers (1987:579-580) points out apropos repetition compulsion (as interpreted by Lacan, who “stresses the enigmatic character of repetition-compulsion”), that “[n]othing has been more enigmatic than this Wiederholen, which is very close, so the most prudent etymologists tell us, to the verb 'to haul' (haler)- hauling as on a towpath - very close to a hauling of the subject who drags his thing into a certain path that he cannot get out of" (1977:50-51). Lacan chooses to elevate this enigma - repetition, this ruttedness - to the status of being one of the fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis, saying, “The very constitution of the field of the unconscious is based on the Wiederkehr" (1977:48)”.

Eisner (2011:11) proposes that art contributes to knowledge, compassion and empathy, and “helps us to connect with personal, subjective emotions, and through such a process, it helps us to discover our own interior landscape”. Ken Robinson (2001:153) suggests that:

Artists are dealing with ideas and insights that are as profound, as important and as substantive as those that are dealt with in science. To assume that artistic judgements are simply personal opinion is as mistaken as assuming that all scientific opinion is undisputed fact. Meaning and interpretation are at the heart of all creative processes.

6.3.1. Abject Objects

God created a helpmeet for man
to bear his kin
and to bear his sin²⁰⁸

The abject artworks (Figures 36-40) primarily serve as commentary on identification with the maternal body as abject. Woman, as the one who gives birth to and cares for the child, has been associated with terms such as lack, container/receptacle, and castration. In her essay, *Powers of horror* (1982) that deals with abjection, Kristeva confirms that women, and more specifically the maternal body, are associated with terms such as ‘abject’, ‘not whole’, ‘devouring’, ‘primal’, ‘a hole’, ‘matrix’, ‘lack’, ‘desire’, ‘container/receptacle’, ‘life’, ‘birth’, ‘castration’, and as the original home from which life emerges. The maternal body, which provides food, warmth, care and nurturance, is paradoxically also associated with the opposite, such as unmet needs, abandonment, death and denial (Kristeva, 1982:12-15).²⁰⁹

As part of my process of re-storying female ‘voices’ I created five abject (the concept is discussed below) figures using dry aloe leaves which were transformed into porcelain sculptures. My association with aloes includes qualities such as endurance and survival as they are hardy plants that excel at surviving periods of drought in harsh conditions and

²⁰⁸ M de Beer.

²⁰⁹ According to Irigaray (1991:35), “[t]he relationship with the mother is a mad desire, because it is the ‘dark continent’ par excellence. It remains in the shadows of our culture; it is night and it is hell”. This problematic association with the maternal body has caused the female, and more specifically the maternal body, to be banished to the periphery of the Symbolic due to its association with the Real.

surroundings. Another association is the notion of healing based on the medicinal and healing properties of Aloe Ferox. My choice of aloes as subject matter, based on these associations, is partly in response to the hardship experienced by many Boer and Afrikaner women during the Great Trek, the Anglo-Boer War and in their assigned roles as mothers and *volksmoeders*. Another reason for collecting dried aloe leaves from my garden, is based on a personal habit of planting a tree or shrub on the death of a loved one. Most of the dried leaves were collected from an aloe I planted after the death of my mother, in memory of her endurance and as a part of personal mourning and healing.

I added sculpted porcelain doll's heads to the aloe leaves, which had been covered in a thin coating of porcelain, after which they were fired in a kiln. This resulted in five abject female figures (Figures 36-40) of which three represent the main protagonists of this study, Susanna Catharina, Maria Elizabeth and Petronella Isabella. The fourth figure, Racheltjie, represents Afrikaner women, and the fifth, Maria Magdalena, serves as a personal pseudonym.²¹⁰ My choice of the pseudonym Maria Magdalena is motivated by the fact that, although I was initially baptized Maria Magdalena, after my paternal grandmother, my birth was subsequently registered under a different name.

Mary Magdalene is a contentious figure in Christian mythology. According to Marina Warner (1976:225), the Virgin Mary, as the mother of Christ, has to remain pure and exempt from sin according to Christian and catholic interpretations. It is Mary Magdalene who has to carry the burden of repentant whore and sinner. Warner (1976:235) argues that the Virgin Mary, as the holy sorrowful mother, and Mary Magdalene, as the repentant sinner, form “a diptych of Christian patriarchy's idea of women”. Warner (1976:225) proposes that:

Both female figures are perceived in sexual terms: Mary as a virgin and Mary Magdalene as a whore – until her repentance. The Magdalene, like Eve, was brought into existence by the powerful undertow of misogyny in Christianity, which associates women with the dangers and degradation of the flesh.

The five abject sculptures can be interpreted as my attempt to resurrect and ‘give voice’ to the fragmented identities of the protagonists. The additional artworks serve to further illustrate my interpretation of the affective dimension of their experiences as female members of a patriarchal culture and society. These five sculptures, consisting of dolls' heads and limbless

²¹⁰ As discussed previously, Racheltjie de Beer is an apocryphal Afrikaner heroine who supposedly sacrificed her life in order for her brother to survive.

‘torsos’, refer to the ambiguous identification with the maternal body. Each abject porcelain figure has sisal strings that emerge from various orifices and body parts (nose, eyes, mouth, ears, vagina, and breasts), serving as metaphors for suffering (blood) and nurturing (milk), and, therefore, the abject maternal body.

The addition of sisal and red cotton string is a recurring theme in many of my artworks, serving as a signifier of the original and life giving connectedness with the maternal body. The sisal and red cotton strings may also signify the maternal womb and umbilical cord. This is in accordance with Irigaray’s (1993:14) proposal that the womb is “the first nourishing earth, first water, first sheaths, first membranes in which the *whole* child was held, as well as the *whole* mother, through the mediation of her blood”. Irigaray (1993:14) argues that “[t]he phallus becomes the organizer of the world through the man-father at the very place of the umbilical cord” which is the “primal link to the mother” that “once gave birth to man and woman”. She argues that man attempts to replace the womb, “the original matrix”, with his “matrix of language” (Irigaray, 1993:14).

The found objects included in some of the artworks, i. e. dead amphibians, insects, and skeletal remains, such as the skull of a bird, which were collected at my home and the nature reserve bordering my property, all serve to contribute to the notion of abjection.²¹¹ Each abject porcelain figure is strung from a rope (sisal), tied around the neck, onto which fragmented porcelain thorns (as beads) are threaded. This suggests notions such as captivity, enslavement, suffering, choking and death. None of the abject sculptures have arms, as indication of powerlessness and restriction such as forcible restraint imposed by a straitjacket.

The abject artworks, titled *Klaagliedere* (Lamentations) (Figures 41-49), serve to comment on the conflation of female subjectivity with sacrifice and suffering. The title refers to the customary singing of hymns by Boer women (in British concentration camps) as a form of defiance and self-comfort. The *klaagliedere*, as lamentations of sacrifice, grief and mourning, serve as metaphors for suffering and the detrimental association of the maternal body with abjection. The artwork titled *Klaaglied: Begrafnis-brief* (Lamentation: Funeral notice) (Figure 40), includes an etched copper plate with the words of the funeral notice written by Maria Elizabeth (which she kept in her recipe book) on the death of her youngest daughter.

²¹¹ Diane Jonte –Pace (2001:66) proposes that bird beaks are “foundational themes of the uncanny: death and the mother”.

Abjection, as attraction and repulsion, is a central and recurring theme in my artworks. As pointed out by a viewer during the exhibition of my artwork at the KZNSA gallery, “your work is discomfort on display, beautiful yet disturbing”. This is in accordance with the ambiguous nature of female subjectivity in the context of a masculine Symbolic, where women seem to serve as beautiful objects, whilst at the same time, serving as mirrors for masculine castration anxiety, as abject. The alluring and intriguing aspects of the abject result in continuous anxiety and vigilance, demonstrated in cleansing rituals, religious prohibitions, and societal rules and laws, due to the perceived concomitant threat of disintegration of borders, and ultimately subjectivity. Patriarchal societies often impose dress etiquettes on women, in an effort to conceal the abject female body, and women often stand accused of dressing ‘inappropriately’, thereby ‘inviting’ rape when not adhering to prescriptive dress codes.

Kristeva’s (1982) theory of abjection (the abject maternal body) is based on the apparent human need to reject the imaginary narcissistic union with the mother in order to become a subject through entering the threshold to the Symbolic, as prescribed by the discourse of the Father (Lacan). The process of separating from what/whom s/he identifies with, threatens the infant’s initial precarious sense of self, resulting in the apparent need to constantly repress the disorientating threat of liminality. According to Keltner (2011:38), abjection, love and loss form part of the process of separation from the mother, as “exposure to and struggle with alterity”, which forms part of the conditioning of “the subject’s access to socio-symbolic meaning”. She argues that the abject is “essentially bound to signification insofar as it is an archaic, elementary signifier of the *want* that my being, as a speaking subject, is founded upon” (Keltner, 2011:45). The abject signifies the precarious nature of boundaries that have been constructed in an effort to prevent the collapse of meaning and order dictated by societal rules and norms. Order, as a prerequisite for entrance into and participation in the Symbolic, is under threat, and with it, the tenuous hold on meaning which distinguishes a subject from itself and another.²¹² Abjection causes feelings of disgust, and concomitantly attraction or fascination with the object of disgust, which results in an ambiguous longing for, and revolt

²¹² “We may call it a border; abjection is above all ambiguity. Because, while releasing a hold, it does not radically cut off the subject from what threatens it-on the contrary, abjection acknowledges it to be in perpetual danger. But also because abjection itself is a composite of judgement and affect, of condemnation and yearning, of signs and drives. Abjection preserves what existed in the archaism of preabjectal relationship, in the immemorial violence with which a body becomes separated from another body in order to be-maintaining that night in which the outline of the signified thing vanishes and where only the impossible affect is carried out” (Kristeva in Oliver 1997: 236-7).

against, that which challenges clear distinctions between self and other.²¹³ The abject threatens margins as it does not respect borders and “constantly challenges one’s own tenuous borders of selfhood” (McAfee, 2004:46).²¹⁴ The abject, thus, threatens the persistence of subjectivity and necessitates a constant negotiation between existence and non-existence as an eternally repeating process in the life of the subject.²¹⁵ Since subjectivity requires constant vigilance to maintain a ‘clean and proper’ body (a body that serves as cipher of a stable, consistent self), the actual porousness of the leaking, sweating, bleeding, defecating body is a source of abjection, revulsion and (simultaneously) attraction. This abjectness of the body (especially the female body) requires constant vigilance, which is why, for Kristeva, the subject is ‘always in process’.

Kristeva (1982:4-5) defines the abject as an ambivalent entangled throng of conflicting affects that constantly challenge the experiences of spatiality (inside versus outside), and surfaces (openings, hollows) that represent the indefinite boundaries of the infant and the maternal body.²¹⁶ What Freud identified as the uncanny (un/Heimlich) she develops and redefines as the maternal abject.²¹⁷ Kristeva rightly proposes, as pointed out by Oliver (1993:6), that “women’s oppression can be partially attributed to our discourses on motherhood and misplaced abjection”. The maternal body (banished to the Real) serves as the original and ambiguous signifier that disturbs all perception. The maternal body is associated with our first home, and concomitantly our expulsion from the place of containment and narcissistic bliss, as a fearful reminder of the fragility and precarity of human life. The maternal abject, therefore, manifests as an eternal anxiety caused by the need to separate

²¹³ According to McAfee (2004:46), “[w]hat is abjected is radically excluded but never banished altogether. It hovers at the periphery of one’s existence, constantly challenging one’s own tenuous borders of selfhood”.

²¹⁴ “The abject is what one spits out, rejects, almost violently excludes from oneself: sour milk, excrement, even a mother’s engulfing embrace. What is abjected is radically excluded but never banished altogether” (McAfee, 2004: 46).

²¹⁵ According to Kristeva (1997:229), “[t]here looms, within abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable. It lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated. It beseeches, worries, and fascinates desire, which, nevertheless, does not let itself be seduced. Apprehensive, desire turns aside; sickened, it rejects”.

²¹⁶ “Abjection preserves what existed in the archaism of preobjectal relationship, in the immemorial violence with which a body becomes separated from another body in order to be - maintaining that night in which the outline of the signified thing vanishes and where only the impossible affect is carried out” (Kristeva in Oliver 1997: 236-7).

²¹⁷ According to Kristeva (1991:182), the Freudian uncanny is a repression of recurring anxiety. She suggests that “Freud wanted to demonstrate at the outset, on the basis of a semantic study of the German adjective *heimlich* and its antonym *unheimlich* that a negative meaning close to that of the antonym is already tied to the positive term *heimlich*, ‘friendly, comfortable,’ which would also signify ‘concealed, kept from sight,’ ‘deceitful and malicious,’ ‘behind someone’s back.’ Thus, in the very word *heimlich*, the familiar and intimate are reversed into their opposites, brought together with the contrary meaning of ‘uncanny strangeness’ harboured in *unheimlich*” (Kristeva, 1991:182).

oneself from the threatening yet familiar, while at the same time yearning for the plenitude once experienced.²¹⁸

Diane Jonte-Pace (2001:137) proposes that the ego is formed on a predication of absence, which is the loss of the maternal body. She suggests that the “ego or self is constructed of a mix of melancholic open wounds that cannot heal”, and that the “strange yet familiar body of the mother is the corpus or corpse or ‘open wound’” which underlies the yearning for immortality and its conflation with the maternal body (Jonte-Pace, 2001:138).²¹⁹ Irigaray (1991:40) argues that the Lacanian Phallus has been erected in the place of the umbilical cord, which is the “unavoidable and irreparable wound” or scar that precedes naming of the new-born. She points out that the mother, and more specifically the maternal body, has been associated with the “repellence of matter, the horror of blood, the ambivalence of milk, menacing traces of the father’s phallus, and even the hole we left behind when we came into the world” (Irigaray, 1991:54).

The abject from which he does not cease separating is for him, in short, a land of oblivion that is constantly remembered. Once upon a blotted-out time, the abject must have been a magnetized pole of covetousness. But the ashes of oblivion now serve as a screen and reflect aversion, repugnance. The clean and proper (in the sense of incorporated and incorporable) become filthy, the sought-after turns into the banished, fascination into shame (Kristeva in Oliver 1997: 235).

It can be argued that it is a patriarchal construal of castration anxiety, as well as the subsequent negative association with the maternal body as abject, that causes it to be conflated with the threat of death and mortality. The omnipotent maternal body from which new life and milk appears, and on which the infant depends for survival, paradoxically threatens the persistence of subjectivity as imagined destruction (death anxiety). In accordance with Irigaray, Julie Kelso (2007:61) maintains that the psychoanalytic identification with the oedipal castration myth, as the founding myth of civilisation, leads to rejection of the mother/maternal due to its insistence on the need to reject the desire for the mother in favour of the Law of the Father. Jonte-Pace (1996:64,71) also blames Freud’s

²¹⁸ “What makes something abject and not simply repressed is that it does not entirely disappear from consciousness. It remains as both an unconscious and a conscious threat to one’s own clean and proper self” (McAfee, 2004:46).

²¹⁹ Such as the ‘open wounds’ of the ‘abjected objects’ in figures 35-37.

Oedipal ‘master plot’, “death wishes for fathers and erotic desires for mothers”, for the “gendering of ideas about mortality and immortality, and the unconscious linkage of maternity and mortality”.²²⁰ An unconscious association of the maternal body with re-engulfment, and ultimately death, gives rise to the need to repress, reject and control the perceived omnipotent body/power of the mother.

Irigaray (1991:35-36) suggests that the maternal relationship remains relegated to the shadow of culture where the maternal function serves to underpin the social order in service to individual and collective needs.²²¹ Marginalisation and oppression within a culture and society limit the sublimatory expression of drives and affects, and therefore, subject position and agency (Oliver, 2004).²²² In Deuteronomy 5:9 it states that the Lord which is our God is a jealous God who would visit the iniquity (or sins) of the fathers on the children for up to three or four generations.²²³ This is misleading, as the sins of the fathers have been visited on children (and more specifically female children) for many generations and for hundreds of years. I am in agreement with Irigaray’s (1991:38) proposal, that without access to a feminine Imaginary or Symbolic, women serve in support of a Symbolic order dominated by the Phallic signifier, which replaces the placenta and umbilical cord as signifiers of the original bond with the mother.

²²⁰Freud’s interpretation of the “fort” and “da” children’s game (Beyond the Pleasure Principle, in which Freud introduces his theory of the death drive), which apparently “revealed the child’s ability to tolerate the absence of the mother and the delayed gratification of hunger while awaiting the mother’s return (Jonte-Pace, 1996:71). This, in fact, is also a story about life and death and about immortality, and links the death drive and the desire for immortality to the maternal body (Jonte-Pace, 1996: 72-74)

²²¹ Whitford (1991:67) points out that according to Irigaray women have traditionally been conceptualised as a ‘residue’ or ‘magma’ “from which men, humanity draw nourishment, shelter, the resources to live or survive for free”.

²²² As explained by Oliver (2004:93), “[i]n terms of psychoanalytic theory, those othered within culture are subject to, and interiorize, a punishing superego that excludes them as abject. The superego of the dominant culture judges them inferior and defective”. In this case, it is not only an othering by a dominant culture, but ultimately being othered by the Symbolic order, within which satisfactory sublimation and full subjectivity is impossible”.

²²³ The Holy Bible, English Standard version Copyright 2001 Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Bibles.



Figure 36. *Abject: Susanna Catharina* (porcelain, cotton and found object) Photo: M. De Beer 2016.



Figure 37. *Abject: Maria Elisabeth* (porcelain, sisal and found objects) Photo: M. De Beer 2016.

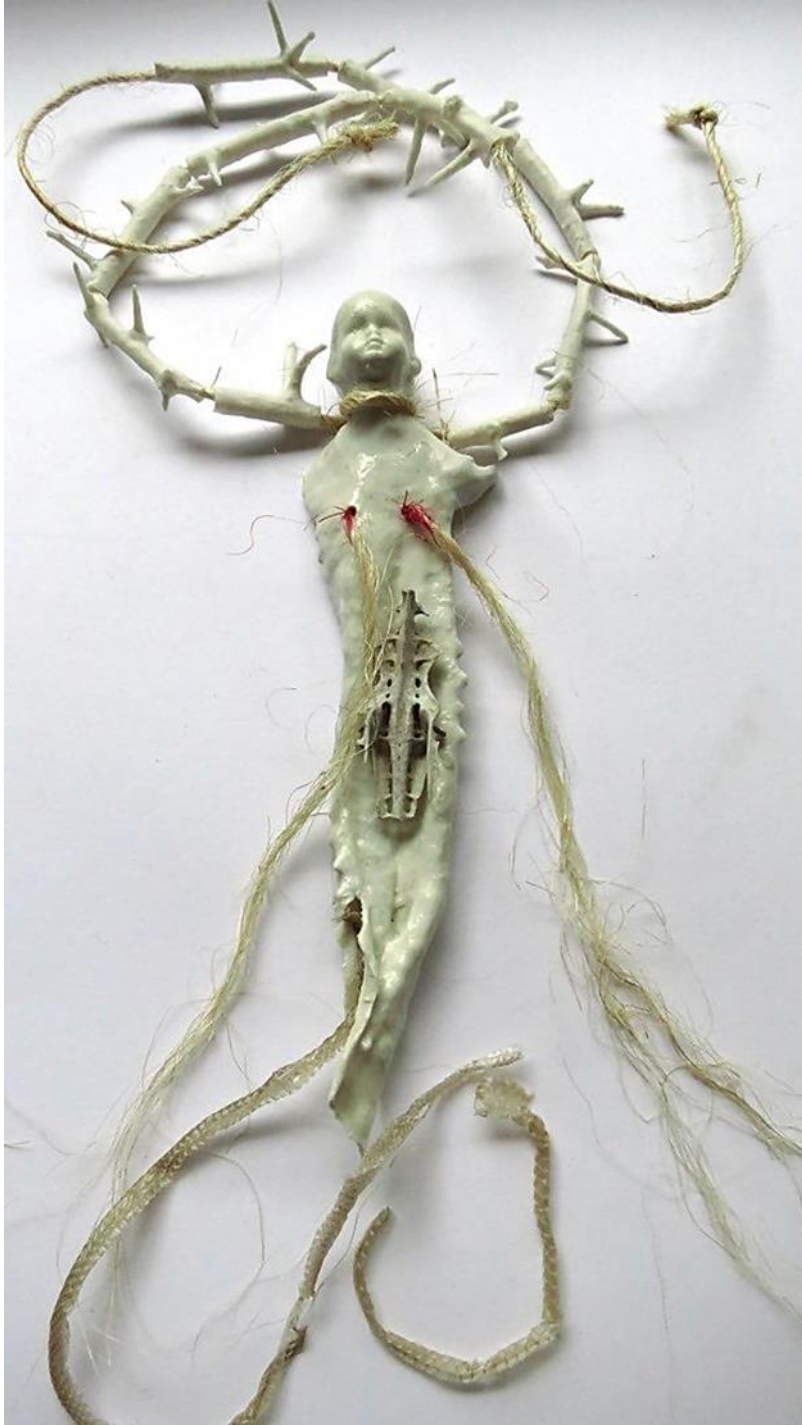


Figure 38. *Abject: Petronella Isabella* (Porcelain, sisal and found objects). Photo: M de Beer 2016.



Figure 39. *Abject: Racheltjie* (porcelain, sisal and found object) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 40. *Abject: Maria Magdalena* (porcelain, sisal and found object) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 41. *Klaaglied (Lamentation): It pleased the lord of heaven and earth* (porcelain, copper and cotton) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 42. *Klaaglied (Lamentation0: Uit dieptes gans verlore (The depths of despair)* (porcelain and found objects) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 43. *Klaaglied (Lamentation): She hides her weakness* (porcelain and cotton) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 44. *Klaaglied (Lamentation): Oh Mother, where art thou?* (Porcelain and glass beads) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 45. *Klaaglied (Lamentation): For better or for worse* (porcelain, cotton, bone) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.

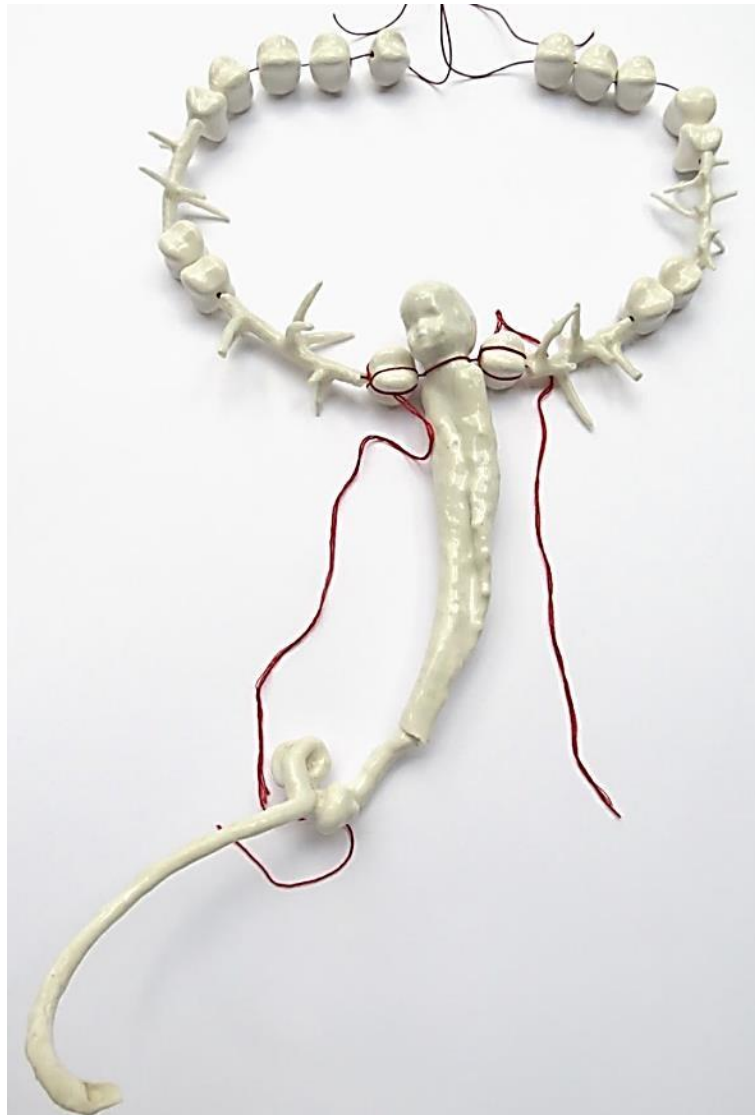


Figure 46. *Klaaglied (Lamentation): While the black dog eats at her heart* (porcelain and cotton) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 47. *Klaaglied: (Lamentation: She hides her tears)* (porcelain and sisal) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 48. *Klaaglied (Lamentation): She beats herself* (porcelain, pearls and silk) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 49. *Klaaglied (Lamentation): Within dark and desperate nights (porcelain, cotton and glass)* Photo: M. de Beer 2016.

6.3.2. Domestic objects: Vessels/receptacles

My artwork includes a selection of spoons, porcelain and silver, and small sculptures which consist of sculpted porcelain dolls (heads and faces), as well as appropriated teacups and saucers. None of the objects in this series, although characteristically associated with domestic use and service, are practical or functional in the traditional sense. The *koppies/poppies* (dolls/cups) (Figures 50-62) series, and the collection of spoons (Figures 65-75), may be regarded as comment on Afrikaner women's stoic acceptance of their subjugation in domestic and reproductive service to the family and nation. As argued in previous chapters, Afrikaner women assumed their nurturing and supportive roles as *volksmoeders*, which included their duties as homemakers and mothers, in order to access participation in a patriarchal Symbolic. Once their use-value to the *volk* became obsolete they concentrated on their roles as homemakers and nurturers of families in order to access sublimation. Identification with domesticity is reflected in the archives of both my mother and grandmother, who both actively participated in their duties as mothers and wives.

As mentioned earlier, the repetition of motifs in my artwork, such as spoons and teacups, also indicate the notion of repetition compulsion, which may be interpreted as a method to 'work through' trauma, and forms part of my re-storying of the subjugated and muted voices of ordinary women and members of a patriarchal culture and society. The notion of disembodied doll's heads crafted onto teacups and saucers may also indicate the notion of objectification, of female abject 'objects' who, without hands, have been rendered powerless. Apart from connotations such as objectification, decoration and domesticity, the sculptures that include Staffordshire teacups (Figures 50-54) also evoke the colonisation and incarceration of Boer women during the Anglo-Boer War.

Each sculpture has a 'name', inscribed in 22 carat gold lustre, in accordance with women's characteristic use-value in a patriarchal culture and society. The names assigned to the series of *koppie/poppie* sculptures include typical Afrikaans sayings such as *fyn en flenters* (delicate and broken), as well as words from an Afrikaans poem such as *geduldig en gediensig* (patient and faithful).²²⁴ The sculptures also signify uniformity and conformation to

²²⁴ The words *geduldig en gediensig* are typically associated with Jan F. E. Cilliers' poem *Die osse* (The oxen), which acknowledges the service of *trekrosse* (oxen) during the Great Trek. Oxen are strong animals whose power, as beasts

prescriptive cultural and gender norms, such as the female tradition of accumulating a trousseau before marriage. Women traditionally collect a trousseau before marriage or receive a selection of household gifts on their wedding day. This is to prepare and ‘set them up’ for taking over the role of ‘nurturing their spouses’. In this sense women are keepers of place and space, which dictate their value as objects of exchange, from the house of the father to the house of the husband.

Irigaray (1985:31) argues that “woman is traditionally a use-value for man, an exchange value among men; in other words, a commodity”. The series of silver and porcelain spoons (Figures 64-74) signify service and use-value. Women use spoons and cups in the execution of their duties of feeding and nurturing their families, and it may be argued that women, therefore, serve as metaphorical receptacles/vessels in reproductive service to a patriarchal Symbolic. The porcelain spoons (Figure 69), which include female faces and thorny wooden ‘handles’, hint at endurance and suffering in the execution of assigned roles and duties. Boer women, as mothers and wives who bore their duties stoically, endured tremendous suffering during their incarceration in British concentration camps. Many contemporary women have to juggle their roles as home-makers and providers, consequently experiencing emotional and financial pressure in the execution of their duties as providers, mothers and wives.

I include found objects, typically associated with domesticity and the feminine domain, such as a serving tray, teacups, saucers and spoons in further comment on female domesticity. The individual hand-crafted silver spoons (Figure 65) contain personal fingerprints, made from wax impressions, reproduced through the technique of lost wax casting. I incorporate traditional feminine techniques (as mentioned earlier) in a selection of spoons, such as knitting and crochet, as further comment on female domestic duties and normative interpretations of femininity. Both Maria Elizabeth and Petronella Isabella excelled at sewing and knitting, and produced various pieces of clothing for their families, Susanna Smit, apart from doing all the sewing for her family, also taught needlework to female children during the Great Trek.

As argued in the previous chapters, women, as objects of exchange, become complicit in their subjugation in order to gain access to meaning-making within a prescriptive patriarchal

of burden, has been compromised in service to humanity. One can draw a correlation between the passive service of oxen and the stoic subjugated service of *volksmoeders* during the Great Trek and Anglo-Boer War.

culture. The archives of my female ancestors indicate that they conformed to a patriarchal Symbolic as a method to access sublimation, albeit in supportive capacity. Irigaray (in Whitford, 1991:70-74), argues that women function as passive empty receptacles for the reproduction of a phallomorphic social and cultural Symbolic. The totalising transcendental status of the Symbolic banishes women to supportive roles, as wives and mothers, thus rendering them complicit in the agenda of a masculine cultural Symbolic (Irigaray in Whitford, 1991:70-74).²²⁵ In accordance with Irigaray, Whitford (1991:28) proposes that the dominant fantasy of the maternal body is that of a volume, “‘a receptacle for the (re)production of sameness’ and ‘the support of (re)production – particularly discourse – in all its forms’”. It can be argued that Afrikaner women served as preservers of an early Afrikaner identity in the making, as passive and empty containers (wombs) in reproductive service to patriarchy.

6.3.3. Dolls

Dolls, heads and limbs, are recurring motifs in my artwork as demonstrated in the *koppie/poppie* sculptures (Figures 50-62), spoons (Figures 65-75), divinities (Figures 90-104), abject objects (Figures 36-40), and brooches (Figures 63-64). Apart from the notion of reiteration (repetition compulsion), the recurring usage of these motifs can be seen to comment on objectification of women in the Western masculine Symbolic.²²⁶ From a very young age girls are given dolls with which to practice and perfect their future roles as mothers, nurturers, lovers and wives. Identification with the compromised subject positions of their mothers sets many young women up for the perpetuation of normative roles. This is supported by Irigaray’s (1993a:45-46) argument that women are condemned to the substratum of a patriarchal Symbolic where they serve supporting roles according to their reproductive use-value. Irigaray (1985:83) points out that woman become objects of consumption, or objects of desire, for men whereby they lose themselves in a masquerade of sublimatory femininity and domesticity. She argues that women submit to the demands of masculine culture which “oppresses them, uses them” and “makes of them a medium of

²²⁵ According to Irigaray (1985:69), “[t]he “feminine” is always described in terms of deficiency or atrophy, as the other side of the sex that alone holds a monopoly on value: the male sex”.

²²⁶ Irigaray (1985:25) proposes that women, in a masculine sexual Imaginary and without an Imaginary of their own, serve “more or less” as obliging props “for the enactment of man’s fantasies”.

exchange, with very little profit to them...[e]xcept in the quasi monopolies of masochistic pleasure, the domestic labour force and reproduction” (Irigaray, 1985:33).

The employment of this motif can also signify the ambivalence of the uncanny/abject, as that which simultaneously attracts and repels. The Freudian association with dolls, linked to the uncanny, is the ambivalent and uncertain relation to inertness (death) as opposed to materiality (life).²²⁷ Dolls ‘exist’ in a make-believe world, similar to women who exist in the periphery of the Symbolic, where they remain excluded from meaning-making according to their own genre. A psychoanalytical interpretation of an ambivalent identification with dolls, whether they are alive or not, relates to the fear of death and mortality which is associated with the omnipotent maternal body. Dolls, with their unseeing eyes, represent lifelessness, loss, the blurring of boundaries and, therefore, the association with disintegration and death.²²⁸

²²⁷ A Freudian interpretation of the uncanny indicates the threatening return of repression, which relates to the familiar maternal body. The fascination with the abject (Kristeva) indicates a yearning for re-engulfment in the semiotic *chora*. In both Freudian and Kristevan interpretations (uncanny/abject) the underlying cause of anxiety is the loss of subjectivity. This fear is never overcome and necessitates constant negotiation of the interpretation of borders, such as the tenuous boundary between life/death, attraction/repulsion.

²²⁸ According to Freud (2003:150), “[t]he sight of severed limbs, a severed head, a hand detached from the arm”, all “have something highly uncanny about them”.



Figure 50. *Fluks en Flink (Diligent and Efficient)* (porcelain and found objects) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 51. *Gebruik en Gebroke (Used and Broken)* (porcelain and found objects) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 52. *Moedeloos en Moederloos (Dejected and Bereaved)* (porcelain and found objects) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 53. *Sku, Skaam en Skugter (Wary, Shy and Withdrawn)* (porcelain and found objects) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 54. *Onsigbaar en Onwrikbaar (Invisible and Steadfast)* (porcelain and found objects) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 55. *Getrou en Gedaan (Faithfull and Exhausted)* (porcelain and found objects) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 56. *Geoffer en getrou (Sacrificed and Faithful)* (porcelain and found objects) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 57. *Poppies en Koppies (Dolls and Cups)* (porcelain and found objects) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 58. *Poppies en Koppies (Dolls and Cups)* (porcelain and found objects) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 59. *Droewig, Driftig en Deugsaam (Sad, Enraged and Virtuous)* (porcelain and found objects) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 60. *Poppies en Koppies (Dolls and Cups)* (porcelain and found objects) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 61. *Geduldig, Gediensig, Gedaan, Getrou en Geoffer (patient, Obedient, Exhausted a, Loyal and Sacrificed)* (porcelain and found objects) Photo: M. de Brer: 2016.



Figure 62. *Fyn en Flenters (Fragile and Broken)* (porcelain and found objects) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.

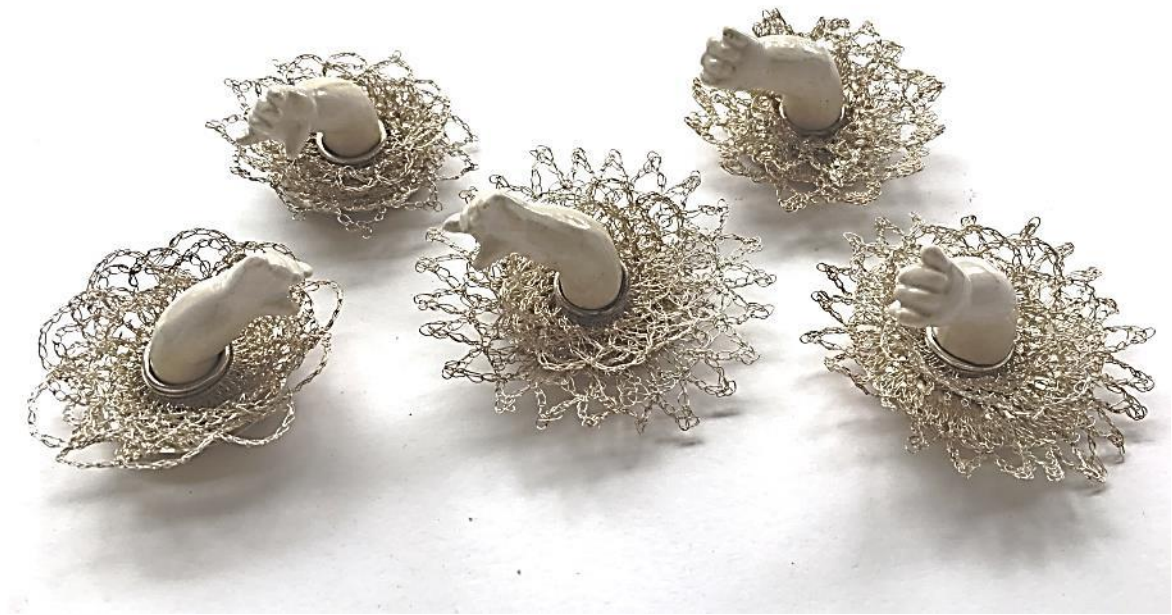


Figure 63. *Fragmented* (silver, porcelain and steel) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 64. Brooches (silver, porcelain, rubies and steel) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 65. Cutlery (silver, sapphires, garnets and cotton) Photo: M. De Beer 2016.



Figure 66. Spoons (silver) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 67. *Eetgerei (Cutlery)* (porcelain and found objects) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 68. Spoons (silver, porcelain, steel, sapphires and tourmalines) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 69. Spoons (porcelain, wood and epoxy) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 70. Spoons (porcelain) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 71. Spoons (porcelain and cotton) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 72. Spoons (porcelain and sisal) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 73. Spoons (porcelain and epoxy) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 74. Spoons (porcelain) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 75. Spoons (porcelain and sisal) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.

6.3.4. Thorns

Thorns, reproduced in porcelain, are another recurring theme in my art practice. I collected thorny sticks and branches which I reproduced in porcelain, after dipping them into porcelain paper clay slurry. These were fired in a kiln which causes the wood to burn and disintegrate, leaving behind thin, hollow, and fragile porcelain shells that represent the shapes of the original pieces of wood. The process of removing the original wooden object through the use of fire (in a kiln), which results in a porcelain replica, may be interpreted as a ritual of ‘resurrection’, or recreation, relating to my attempt at restoring agency retroactively. This may be read as resurrection by disintegration and restoration. The thin porcelain replicas are durable yet fragile, and have to be handled carefully in order to avoid damage or breakage. The vitreous nature of porcelain adds another dimension, such as the delicate clinking sound when the pieces touch each other, which contributes to the notions of delicacy and fragility.

Some of the thorny sticks were cut into smaller pieces, prior to firing, and used to create wearable neckpieces. The assembled thorny neckpieces (Figures 76-89) are fragile and uncomfortable to the wearer thereby compelling awareness and acknowledgement of discomfort, such as the discomfort caused by conformation to prescriptive aesthetic enhancement and adornment of the female body. The fragile edges of the porcelain neckpieces, earrings, and rings have an abrasive effect on the pearls and beads, as well as the skin, which may signify a stoic endurance of discomfort, pain and suffering. This alludes to the hardship and suffering Afrikaner women endured during the Great Trek and especially during their incarceration in British concentration camps during the Anglo-Boer War. I used some of the larger porcelain thorns to create an installation, a circle (or *laager*) (Figure 44), of porcelain thorns. The thorns are linked with red glass beads, the colour of blood, which ‘spill’ from the hollow porcelain shells. This signifies the notion of the original connection with the maternal body as well as the heterogeneous connection between the semiotic and Symbolic. The notion of a *laager* also relates to the *Voortrekker* habit, during overnight stops, to arrange their wagons in a protective circle/*laager*. The spaces between, and under, the wagons were reinforced with thorny branches in defence to attacks by wild animals and the indigenous population.

Thorns may have religious associations (martyrdom), such as the woven crown of thorns placed on the head of Christ (prior to his crucifixion) in mockery of his status as ‘king’. Many women seemingly ‘choose’ to suffer subjugation, pain, and grief stoically. The repetition of

thorns, as a motif, may also signify self-mortification caused by the internalisation of shame, anger and rage. Self-mortification is a recurring theme in Susanna Smit's diary entries, as demonstrated earlier. Self-mortification and melancholia, due to the internalisation of shame, may be brought about by marginalisation and restriction of sublimatory access in a culture and society (Oliver, 2004). Most of the neckpieces, as well as some *klaagliedere* (lamentations) (Figures 41-49), and all five 'abject objects' (Figures 36-40), were strung using sisal rope. The rope may signify restraint and confinement, or a noose, which points to subjugation, entrapment and ultimately death.

The 'fragmented' thorny porcelain sticks and twigs also refer to an ambivalent relation to the female/maternal body. My intention is to draw attention to binary oppositions, such as the association of the female/maternal body with matter, nature and chaos, as opposed to the male body and its association with culture, order, and the law in accordance with Freudian and Lacanian interpretations. Whitford (1991:121) argues that society "is founded upon a gesture of exclusion which constitutes the social as such; what is left outside is 'nature'". She continues to suggest that "[t]he social is constructed against men's fears of death and mortality. In this process it is women, the living reminders of birth, and therefore transience and death, to whom the sign of 'nature' has been attached" (Whitford, 1991:121).

The fragmented and reassembled nature of the porcelain neckpieces relates to Irigaray's (1991:27) referral to the female body as a 'fragmented landscape', woman being "fragmented into bits and pieces, and therefore unable to articulate her difference".²²⁹ The assembling of fragmented porcelain thorns signifies the process of collecting and reassembling remnants, which forms part of my process of re-storying the fragmented narratives of my female ancestors. Irigaray (1991) maintains that without a feminine Imaginary, and whilst excluded from equal sublimatory participation in the Symbolic, female subjectivity remains fragmented. The female body, perceived as a 'defective' male body according to a Freudian interpretation and in accordance with the privileged position of the Phallic signifier in the Symbolic, has served as a signifier for lack, chaos, and the dissolution of societal and cultural order.

²²⁹ Irigaray (1991:30) argues that "the exclusion of a female imaginary certainly puts woman in the position of experiencing herself only fragmentarily, in the little-structured margins of a dominant ideology, as waste, or excess, what is left of the mirror invested by the (masculine) 'subject' to reflect himself, to copy himself".



Figure 76. Necklace (porcelain and garnets) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 77. Necklace (porcelain and chrysoprase) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 78. Necklace (porcelain and moonstone) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 79. Necklace (porcelain, pearls and antique silver clasp) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 80. Necklace (porcelain and cotton) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 81. Necklace and earrings (porcelain, cotton and silver) Photo: M. de Beer.



Figure 82. Necklace and earrings (porcelain, cotton and silver) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 83. Necklace and earrings (porcelain, wool and 18ct gold) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 84. Necklace (porcelain and sisal) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 85. Necklaces (porcelain and felt) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 86. Necklace (porcelain and sisal) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 87. Necklace (porcelain and sisal) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 88. Necklace and ring (porcelain and sisal) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 89. Necklace and ring (porcelain, sisal and gold lustre) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.

6.3.5. Feminine Divinities

Divinity is what we need to become free, autonomous, sovereign. No human subjectivity, no human society has ever been established without the help of the divine (Irigaray, 1993b:62).

The ‘divinities’ series of sculptures (Figures 90-104) serve to contribute to the conceptualisation of a feminine Imaginary and Divine. My intention is not to dictate a new understanding of relating to transcendence, but rather to comment on the lack of a sufficient feminine relation to the Divine, as well as to suggest an alternative interpretation of feminine transcendence which remains open-ended. The fifteen ‘divinity/deity’ sculptures are all dissimilar which suggest multiplicity, and a metamorphosing ‘becoming’. This challenges the idea of a singular, and unifying patriarchal masculine god. Patriarchal Christianity has claimed divinity for itself as, according to its interpretation, there is only one defining sex which dictates origin, namely the masculine.²³⁰ The series of fifteen dissimilar sculptures also signify resistance to the fabricated unifying *volksmoeder* myth, as well as the myth of the *kaalvoet vrou* (barefooted woman) in service to patriarchy. Each sculpture signifies personal attempts at retrieving agency from within a dethroned heritage, serving as sublimatory insurrections.

The sculptures were made by reproducing wooden sticks and thorns in porcelain paper clay. I added a variety of porcelain dolls’ heads to the sculptures and included headdresses, haloes, crowns or antlers.²³¹ The mythical porcelain figures, with dolls’ heads crafted onto stick/twig/thorny bodies, signify abjection, as an indication of the transgression of boundaries between the human body and nature, in accordance with the Freudian association of the feminine with nature/chaos (as discussed earlier). This forms part of my attempt to challenge Phallogocentric patriarchal interpretations of the female body, as abject. The sculptures evoke the abject notion of attraction and repulsion, as they are striking yet disturbing. Red strings, which sprout from the bodies of the sculptures, signify the abject notion of having to maintain a clean and proper body (a body leaking fluid and blood) which forms part of maintaining boundaries. The red strings also signify the umbilical cord and placenta (as discussed earlier)

²³⁰ According to Irigaray (1993:62), “[o]ur theological tradition presents some difficulty as far as God in the feminine gender is concerned. There is no *woman* God, no female trinity: mother, daughter, spirit. This paralyzes the infinite of becoming a woman since she is fixed in the role of the mother through whom the *son* of God is made flesh”.

²³¹ It is interesting to note that Irigaray (1991:40) refers to the placenta as “the first house to surrounds us, whose halo we carry with us everywhere”.

which form a mediating bond between the maternal body and the unborn child.²³² This refers to the original relationship with the maternal body, which is never fully severed due to the heterogeneous interaction between the semiotic and Symbolic via the permeable border of the thetic.

I used red cotton strings to draw attention to damaged areas, such as fragile ‘antlers’ and ‘limbs’, which protrude from the heads and bodies of some sculptures. Accentuating broken areas (or scars), by adding red pigment to the epoxy glue used to re-attach fragmented pieces, is a deliberate decision. My intention is to convey, accentuate and extoll notions of fragility, imperfection, and fragmentation. The sculptures, therefore, defiantly and proudly, bear evidence of scarring and healing. The notion of reassembling fragmented objects forms part of my process of collecting fragmented family narratives in order to facilitate healing. This is also evident in my attempt to reconstruct the fragmented nature of my ancestral archives by creating artworks in response to the abject remains of their lived experiences.

Maureen Murdoch (1990:3-9) proposes that contemporary women have a quest “to heal the deep wound of the feminine”, and to “value themselves as women”. She suggests that this journey, as uncharted territory, “is dark, moist, bloody, and lonely”, forming part of a search for the dismembered and fragmented parts of the self, and the “lost soul of culture” (Murdoch, 1990:9). This is “what many women today view as reclaiming the Goddess” (Murdoch, 1990:9). She identifies feelings of weariness and uncertainty amongst many of her clients, who, although satisfied with the degree of economic independence attained, express a sense of loss and yearning for a feminine connection (Murdoch, 1990:71-73). In this regard, Murdoch (1990:70-71) quotes a poem by Mary Percy, ‘*For strong women*’, of which I am providing an excerpt:

A strong woman is a woman bleeding
inside. A strong woman is a woman making
herself strong every morning while her, teeth
loosen and her back throbs. Every baby,

²³² Irigaray 1991:40-41) refers to the cutting of the umbilical cord as the “irreparable wound”, which long precedes the castration myth. She also proposes that the womb “is fantasised by many men as to be a devouring mouth, a cloaca or anal and urethral outfall, a phallic threat, at best reproductive. And in the absence of valid representations of female sexuality, this womb merges with women’s sex [*sexe*] as a whole” (Irigaray, 1991:41). She argues that in the place of the umbilical cord and “then the breast, there shall come in its time, for man, the penis which binds, gives life to, nourishes and recentres bodies, recalling in penetration, in touching beyond the skin and the will, in the outpouring, something of intra-uterine life, with detumescence evoking the end, mourning, the ever-open wound” (Irigaray, 1991:42).

a tooth, midwives used to say, and now
 every battle a scar. A strong woman
 is a mass of scar tissue that aches
 when it rains and wounds that bleed
 when you bump them and memories that get up
 in the night and pace in boots to and fro

Joan Chamberlain Engelsman (1995:39) argues that “there are several ramifications of the repression of the feminine in religion and the return of the mother-goddess in disguised and distorted forms”, such as, women being “described as witches”. Leonard Shlain (1998:vii) draws a direct link between the conflict, in written text versus images, and the conflict, in what he interprets as “the alphabet versus the goddess”. He maintains that both men and women worshipped goddesses during pre-history, as well as early history, and, furthermore, “women functioned as chief priests, and property commonly passed through the mother’s lineage” (Shlain, 1998:vii). He proposes the subjugation of women, the demise of the goddess, and “the advent of harsh patriarchy and misogyny” to have originated in the development of literacy and a consequent dominance of the left brain hemisphere and rationality (Shlain, 1998:viii). According to Shlain (1998:7),

The Old Testament was the first alphabetic written work to influence future ages. Attesting to its *gravitas*, multitudes still read it three thousand years later. The words on its pages anchor three powerful religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Each is an exemplar of patriarchy. Each monotheistic religion features an imageless Father deity whose authority shines through His revealed Word, sanctified in its written form. Conceiving of a deity who has no concrete image prepares the way for a kind of abstract thinking that inevitably leads to law codes, dualistic philosophy, and objective science, the signature triad of Western culture.

Afrikaner cultural identity is founded on the biblical myth of ‘God the Father’, who with ‘His Son’, rules over ‘His people’. Consequently, Afrikaner women’s relation to the Divine has been through identification with the sacrificial and suffering Virgin Mary, as the mother of God. Within this ethos female sublimation and access to agency have been limited to an

idealised interpretation of sacrificial, suffering motherhood, as the sorrowful mother.²³³ From this notion it becomes easy to construct a patriarchal cultural myth of gender inequality sanctioned by God, compelling Afrikaner women to serve as reproducers of this sanctified patriarchal myth. As argued previously, Susanna Smit identified with a pietistic form of Calvinism in order to access sublimation in a patriarchal culture.

Each ‘divinity’ sculpture has been ‘named’ in deliberate response to foreclosure of the maternal body in the Symbolic, and in accordance with an alternative interpretation of normative maternal qualities. The names I allocated to my sculptures serve to challenge the fabricated iconic identity ascribed to Boer/Afrikaner women by cultural entrepreneurs such as Postma and Stockenström. The constructed *volksmoeder* myth, as argued previously, rendered Afrikaner women as reticent, sacrificing, obedient and subservient mothers confined to the domestic realm. In contrast to normative qualities such as domesticity, willingness to sacrifice, chastity and subservience, I chose values such as abundance, renewal, redemption, fierceness, resoluteness and fearlessness when naming my sculptures. This is in contribution to the conceptualisation of a feminine Imaginary, and to acknowledge potential sublimatory redemption of maternal sacrifice, in opposition to the accusation by various historiographers that Afrikaner women were enthusiastic and willing participants in a patriarchal agenda.

Whitford (in Irigaray, 1991:159) proposes that “the divine is related to the question of women’s generic identity in the symbolic order” and the divine “can be seen as a kind of mirror or ideal which women need in order to mediate relationships between them and particularly to symbolize their own ‘death’”. Irigaray (1993:72) insists that women’s search for liberation and freedom within a masculine Symbolic cannot be separated from the absence of a God of their own, as “[t]he two things are linked and necessary to the constitution of an identity and community”. She maintains that female identity has “been constituted from outside in relation to a social *function*, instead of to a female identity and autonomy” (Irigaray, 1993:72).

As pointed out by Ellen Armour (2002:214-215), Irigaray views Christianity as a “site where the primordial maternal sacrifice both occurs and is hidden”, and sacrifice is constantly re-enacted in culture where it manifests in family dynamics, economics and philosophy. Irigaray

²³³ In her comprehensive study, ‘*Alone of all her sex: the myth and the cult of the Virgin Mary*’, Marina Warner (1976) offers an in depth investigation of the various roles assigned to the Virgin Mary, such as mother, bride, queen, and virgin. These rolls are evident in art, legends, folklore, history, psychology and literature. Warner (1976) remains adamant that all the roles ascribed to the Virgin Mary condemned women to perpetual inferiority. My interest is in the identification with the legendary sacrificing mother, evident in the *volksmoeder* myth.

(cited in Armour 2002: 215) suggests that belief presupposes a denial of the Real in order to sustain the function of “the sacrificial economy it sustains”. Kelso (2007:22), in agreement with Irigaray, states that the monopoly of origin (as evident in the book of Genesis) equates to “the murder of the mother”. She argues that symbolic matricide (erasure of maternal debt) ultimately results in the suppression of maternal a genealogy, and provides the patriarchy with a monopoly on symbolic value (Kelso, 2009:23). Kristeva (1992:17) interprets religious structuring to go hand in hand with abjection, which “persists as exclusion or taboo”, “as a dialectical elaboration” of a “threatening otherness” which has been “integrated” in the Christian word.

The establishment of a feminine Divine (and maternal genealogy) is, therefore, crucial in order to end women’s status as sacrificial objects in keeping with masculine terms and conditions (Whitford in Irigaray, 1991:159). In order to conceptualise a feminine Imaginary women need to envision a kind of Divinity that relates to their form/genre where the female body is not associated with sacrificing and suffering images of wives, mothers, and daughters, according to monotheistic patriarchal interpretations (Irigaray, 1993b). Irigaray (1993b) advocates the notion that women would need to establish a non-sacrificial feminine Divine, a transcendence of their own, which relates to their genre in order to achieve full subjectivity. She (Irigaray, 1993b:64) argues that,

[m]an is supposedly woman’s perfect other, her model, her essence. The most human and divine goal woman can therefore conceive is to become man. If she is to become woman, if she is to accomplish her female subjectivity, woman needs a god who is a figure for the perfection of her subjectivity.

Leonard Shlain (1998:7) argues that “[g]oddess worship, feminine values, and women’s power depend on the ubiquity of the image”. He continues as follows: “[w]hen a culture elevates the written word at the expense of the image, patriarchy dominates”, and in contrast “[w]hen the importance of the image supersedes the written word, feminine values and egalitarianism flourish”. Estella Lauter (1985:47), based on her study of archetypal feminine images (more specifically the mother) produced by female artists, proposes that visual art, more so than creative media, provides direct access to women’s images. She suggests that an image “bypasses words and offers a record that is accessible to anyone who can perceive aesthetically” (Lauter, 1985:47). Lauter (1984:171), based on her study of mythic patterns in visual art, identifies an emerging feminine mythology, with “particular symbols of

transformation and its reverence of the natural order even to the point of sacrificing the purity of human form”.

My ‘divinity’ sculptures, as mythical interpretations of feminine Divinity, are my attempt at contributing to the conceptualisation of a feminine Imaginary and Divine, the lack of which causes women to remain aliens in a patriarchal Symbolic. Coupe (2009:8) takes his cue from Paul Ricoeur who advocates the need “to go beyond the modern view of myth, as ‘false explanation’, to a sense of its ‘explanatory significance and its contribution to understanding’”. Ricoeur “speaks of the ‘symbolic function’ of myth, its power of discovery and revelation” (Coupe, 2009:8). My ‘divinity’ sculptures, therefore, may be interpreted as mythical explorative symbols of feminine transcendence. It is imperative to conceptualise a feminine Imaginary that does not conform to prescribed and restrictive notions of identity, but rather, to allow a fluid interpretation of subjectivity, or as Kristeva suggests, as ‘subjectivity as process’.



Figure 90. *Divinity: The abundant one* (porcelain, silver and cotton) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 91. *Divinity: She who facilitates renewal* (porcelain and sisal) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 92. *Divinity: The one who fulfils* (porcelain, cotton and silver) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 93. *Divinity: She who remains fearless* (porcelain and cotton) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 94. *Divinity: She who provides nourishment* (porcelain and gold lustre) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 95. *Divinity: The one who gives solace* (porcelain and sisal) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 96. *Divinity: The noble one* (porcelain, silver and garnets) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 97. *Divinity: The fierce one* (porcelain and cotton) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 98. *Divinity: Illumination* (porcelain, found object and gold lustre) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 99. *Divinity: redemption* (porcelain and cotton) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 100. *Divinity: Nimbus* (porcelain and found object) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 101. *Divinity: Idol worship* (porcelain and silver) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 102. *Divinity: She who remains undaunted* (porcelain and cotton) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 103. *Divinity: It was a vision* (porcelain, garnets and silver) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.



Figure 104. *Divinity: She who remains resolute* (porcelain) Photo: M. de Beer 2016.

6.4. A poetic re-storying

I include a video presentation, which can be accessed via a hyperlink²³⁴, in which I offer a visual and poetic narrative of the experiences of Susanna Catharina, Maria Elisabeth and Petronella Isabella. My video presentation includes sound in an attempt to reveal sensory experiences, and the materiality of memory. Janice Rahn (2008:303) proposes that the use of video, in qualitative cultural research projects, assists the “cultural shift from print to electronic media”. She suggests that the employment of video in art-research “brings into question the relationship of art as a specific autonomous language and the role and purpose of art in its larger social context” (Rahn, 2008:303). Furthermore, the use of experimental videos offers “a vast semiotic vocabulary, including various storytelling devices, editing techniques, and visual styles” (Rahn, 2008:303).

²³⁴ <https://vimeo.com/226716076>

Paul Stoller (1997:85) proposes that memory and embodiment is not primarily textual, and “the human body is not principally a text; rather, it is consumed by a world filled with smells, textures, sights, sounds, and tastes, all of which spark cultural memories”. In an attempt to demonstrate the embodied and affective dimension of memory, I chose include voice recordings of my poetry in the video. Stoller (1997:91) advocates the notion of sensuous scholarship, “in which experience and reality, imagination and reason, difference and commonality are fused and celebrated in both rigorous and imaginative practices as well as in expository and evocative expression”. My poetry, which draws on the archives of three women, includes ‘found lines’ from their respective archives. I include two additional protagonists in this narrative, Racheltjie de Beer as representation of the self-sacrificing Afrikaner *volksmoeder* myth, and Maria Magdalena based on my personal experiences as an Afrikaner woman, daughter, wife and mother. The sound effects in the video were generated based on my memories and interpretation of the personal history of each protagonist.

My exhibition (digitally recorded and presented with the printed version of the dissertation) constitutes the principal method of my re-storying, complemented by the video presentation, in an attempt to overcome the Cartesian schism between theory and practice, mind and body, or what Stoller (1997) calls ‘academic imperialism’. The images of my artwork, and reading of my poems, serve to concede and reveal the permeable thetic boundary between the affective semiotic and rational Symbolic. Images and poetry facilitate recognition of the affective dimension of enunciation. The printed version of the dissertation, therefore, includes a DVD, which contains the video presentation as well as digital documentation of the exhibition of my artwork.

7. Conclusion

The notion of the self and subjectivity has been an ongoing and highly debated concept analysed from multiple perspectives whilst employing diverse theories, with psychoanalytical theory being one of them. It is evident, as argued in preceding chapters, that subjectivity is always constructed within specific historical, political and cultural contexts and eras. The notion of identity, and the idea of constructing an autonomous individual personality, remains

a popular concern as demonstrated in current obsessive participation in self-confessions and voyeuristic exposure on social media.

Psychoanalytical theory, commencing with Freud and Lacan, reveals the precarious and unstable nature of subjectivity, grounded in the unconscious, and its reliance on the sublimation of innate affects and drives in order to become an active participant in society. Both Freud, via the Oedipal castration myth, and Lacan, via the symbolic Phallus and the Law of the Father, did not adequately consider subjectivity of and for women, who as the ‘sex which is not one’ (Irigaray, 1985) have remained peripheral to the realm of meaning-making. Various feminist theorists, such as Simone de Beauvoir, Melanie Klein, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Bracha Ettinger, and Kelly Oliver have endeavoured to correct misogynist construals of female subjectivity. Kristeva proposes the idea of subjectivity as a dynamic process which has to be negotiated between the sphere of the unconscious pre-verbal semiotic and the Symbolic in order to gain access to signification and participation in society.

Kristeva (2008:1) points out that psychoanalysis provides us with the discovery of the ‘M/Other’ from whom we have to separate in order to gain subjectivity, and of whom traces remain that tie us to an otherness that transcends us, the unconscious. It is a patriarchal identification with the ‘Mother’ as the abjected ‘Other’ that has prevented women from achieving full subjectivity or to become equal agents with access to representations and signification that do not negate the maternal or separate the body from the mind. Psychoanalytical feminist theory provides a method with which to contribute to the discussion of the intricate processes at work in ‘subjectivisation’, particularly concerning the marginalised members of society, and the abject maternal subject, who have been excluded from, and restricted in, sublimatory access in Western societal Symbolic.

With this textual and visual re-storying of the lived experiences of three women, according to specific cultural and historical contexts spanning more than 200 years, I attempt to demonstrate the precarious nature of sublimatory access to meaning-making available to women who remain aliens within the Symbolic. The cultural Symbolic of early Afrikaner women has been located in their roles as nurturers, homemakers and mothers. Because of this, women have been accused of being enthusiastic participants in patriarchal repression, and of actively embracing their roles as *volksmoeders* and mothers to their families. As

communicated to me by a sibling, a fellow Afrikaner woman and mother, “I feel like a giant breast”. It is evident that subject positions granted to women are still restricted according to various prescriptive cultural and societal norms. An interpretive narrative inquiry, when it avoids the solipsistic trap, provides the postmodern subject with a method to recount individual stories of fragmented identities and traumatic lives in an attempt to comprehend unique and complex experiences.

Carl Jung, as well as the Holocaust survivor Victor Frankl, propose that human beings are able to endure and overcome immense suffering as long as they find sufficient meaning within their suffering. Wallace, in his introductory chapter in Ricoeur’s *Figuring the sacred: Religion, narrative, and imagination* (1995:11), explains that, according to Ricoeur, “the desire to be, the task of existence, is inseparable from the scripting of an individual story that gathers together the untold and sometimes repressed narrative fragments constitutive of personal identity”. We are, therefore, simultaneously immersed in history whilst making history, and “[e]veryone needs a story to live by in order to make sense of the pastiche of one’s life” (Wallace in Ricoeur, 1995:11). This re-storying of fragmented lived experiences is my contribution to a much larger collective narrative, and remains open-ended. I acknowledge that my contribution to the conceptualisation of a feminine Imaginary and Divine is inevitably incomplete. This is in keeping with the idea that there are no grand narratives, and that society is comprised of multiple smaller narratives that contribute to the elucidation of consciousness. The reader/viewer is, therefore, encouraged to contribute his or her own interpretation of what it is to be human within unique historical circumstances, as a subject-in-process and ‘subjectivisation’ as process.

Postscript:

In final reflection on the process of producing a body of work as well as a written component for examination purposes, I offer a short explanation of challenges encountered. The foremost trial proved to be the academic expectation of adhering to conventional expectations of a doctoral study whilst also having to include a body of artwork. As a practice-based doctorate is a fairly new study in South Africa, I endeavoured to accommodate both requirements in spite of indeterminate requisite academic outcomes. Another challenge was the fact that I was only informed at a very late stage that the examiners would not view my artwork in person. This points to the fact that the written word is still regarded as the main contribution to

academic knowledge. In this regard Ken Robinson (2001:199) questions the hierarchical importance placed on the written word over the art produced:

Doing the arts should be recognised as being as legitimate an intellectual process as critical inquires about the arts. The heart of this argument is that knowledge can be generated in many ways other than in words and numbers. Not all that we know can be put into words and numbers, nor is what can be put into words and numbers all that we know.

My artworks, which form an integral part of the visual re-storying, need to be viewed in person for the viewer to recognise and appreciate qualities such as texture, weight, fragility and subtle nuances in colour. In response I created a video using my artworks, exhibited in an art gallery, to contribute to the notion of a visual re-storying. The video provided me with an opportunity to reflect on each woman's story and to re-voice their experiences via my artwork and poetry. Susan Finlay (2008:72) talks about "artful ways of knowing" in arts-based research, which "gives interpretive license to the researcher to create meaning from experiences" through the use of poetry, film, drama, narrative writing and plastic arts. She relies on Eisner when she states the following: "He encouraged social sciences to accept artistic ways of knowing as complements to science and urged acceptance of narratives in the form of novels as desirable manuscripts for doctoral dissertations, and he envisaged adaptations of music, dance, and poetry as forms of research representation". In spite of these challenges, I feel that the written component of this research project serves as theoretical underpinning for the visual re-storying, via my artwork and video, and that both components contribute to the explication of the research questions.

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